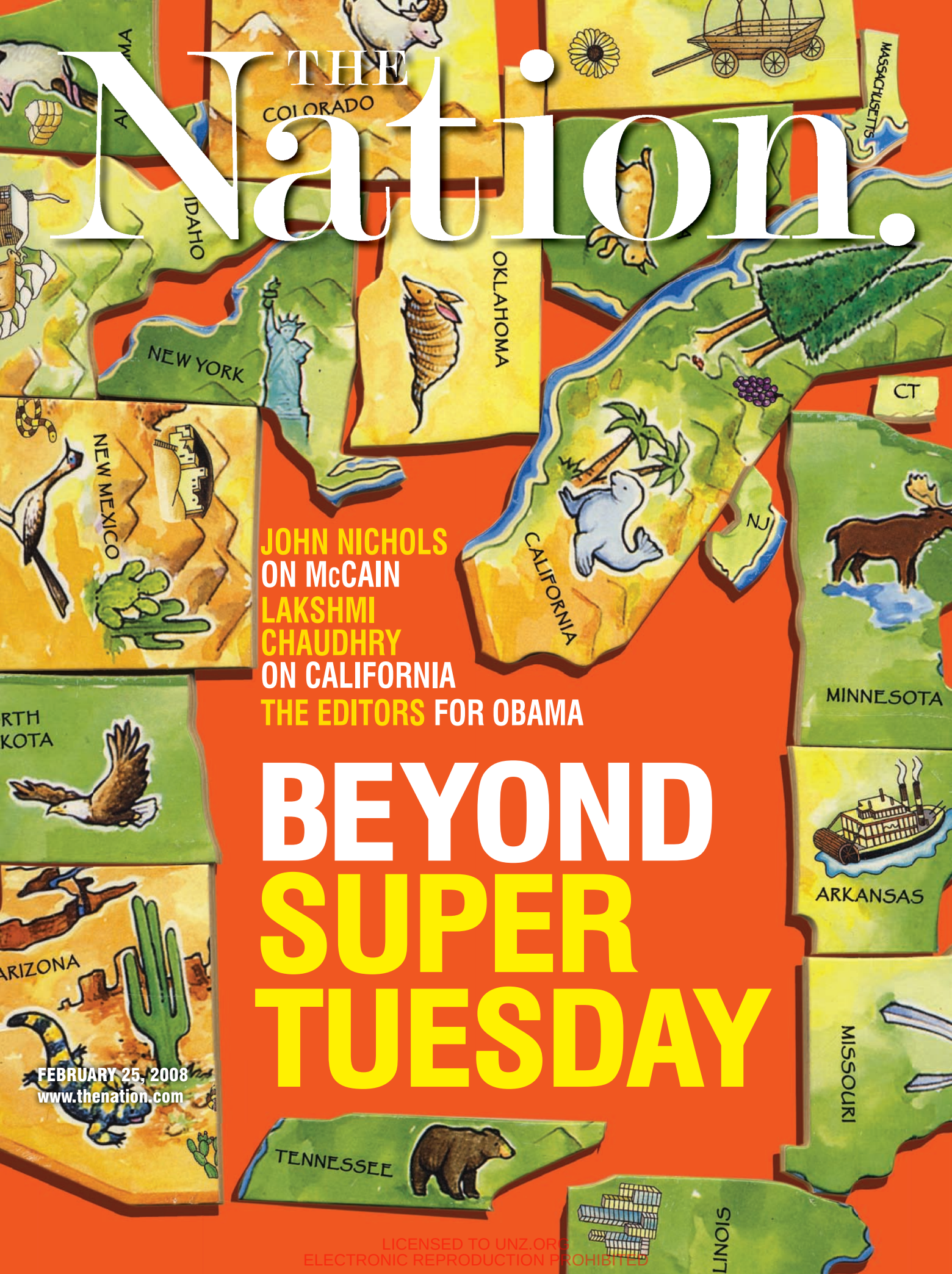

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ON McCAIN

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THE EDITORS FOR OBAMA

BEYOND SUPER TUESDAY

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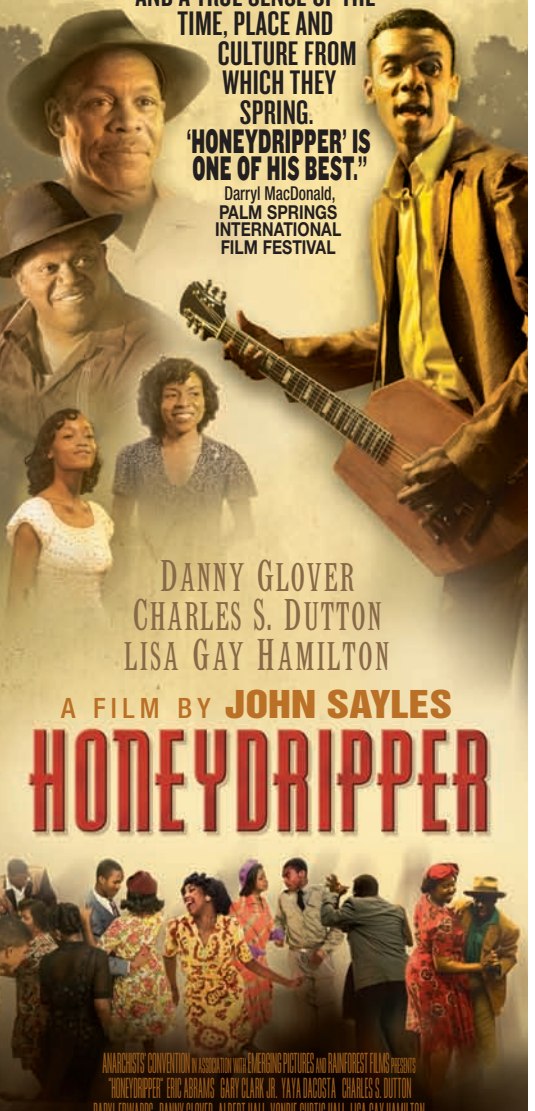

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Letters

THE Nation.
MIXING IT UP
ELECTION '08: THE EDITORS
ARI MELBER on the netroots
JOHN NICHOLS on McCain's surge
PATRICIA J. WILLIAMS on the media, sex and race
CHRISTOPHER HAYES on populism's future

'Ebony and Ivory'?

Laguna Woods, Calif.
Patricia J. Williams's "American Pie" [Jan. 28] is a pure triumph. Williams has all the bite of Maureen Dowd, but she does not break the skin. Her "audacious little hope" that both Obama and Clinton will be on the November ticket is a fantasy for many of us. It would be an extraordinary achievement to have a woman *and* a man of color in the highest offices in the land.
Nicholas P. Dellis

Los Angeles
Patricia J. Williams hits it right on the head with her biting piece on presidential image. Still, although I'm comfortable with Hillary or Barack, the one who truly belonged at the top was John Edwards, who spoke directly and unabashedly to the two most important issues of our time: the corporate stranglehold on politics and the dire necessity of ridding the world of nuclear weapons.
Bart Braverman

New York City
I am hoping, like Professor Williams, that Democrats and the general voting public will not take the poison bait of division and will defeat the kleptocracy of Bush. But the professor's "ebony and ivory" vision seems doubtful. My sense says that white males, Republicans and many independents would swamp the polls to kill this dream.
Sherletta McCaskill

There Will Be Noise

New York City
Stuart Klawans rightly points out that *No Country for Old Men* is "immaculate" ["A Hard Man," Jan. 28]. One reason for the film's unsullied aura is that there is no music to distract one's attention from the sweeping, unpeopled vistas. The silence is eloquent. In *There Will Be Blood*, on the other hand, as Klawans approvingly points out, a relentless score wraps the viewer in an "exhilarating atmosphere in which massed strings can swarm like uneasy flies or shriek like a siren." Exhilaration is precisely what Paul Thomas Anderson's brilliantly acted adaptation of Upton Sinclair's *Oil!* is not about, and those swarming flies and shrieking sirens, loud and manipulative beyond endurance, may well prevent his otherwise impeccable film from being judged a classic.
Joel Conarroe

Klawans Replies

New York City
I buy a laundry detergent labeled "fragrance free." Is this Sudzalot Pure simpler and more natural than the smelly brand? No. Extra chemicals have in fact been added to neutralize the existing odors. So it is with movie soundtracks, where even a stretch of near silence is a manufactured effect. In the case of *No Country for Old Men*, I wholeheartedly agree with Joel Conarroe that the manufacturing is exceptionally effective. But I don't believe the limited use of music is itself a mark of integrity, any more than I think *There Will Be Blood* necessarily lacks integrity because the soundtrack plays up a variety of music, some of it clearly meant to set the teeth on edge. It's all a question of purpose. I continue to have some doubts about that of the Coen brothers but none about Paul Thomas Anderson's.
Stuart Klawans

'Two Poems for *The Nation*': The Skinny

San Francisco
I was astonished and delighted to open my *Nation* and read Jack Spicer's "Two Poems for *The Nation*" [Jan. 21]. But these poems weren't written yesterday (though they read as if they were), so don't you think your readers might like to know the back story? Who is this Jack Spicer anyway?
Bev Dahlen

letters@thenation.com

(continued on page 28)

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Obama's Promise

As this year's front-loaded primary calendar took shape, capped off with the February 5 Super-Mega-Duper Tuesday, many voters once again resigned themselves to watching from the sidelines as a few early states got the privilege of choosing the party's nominee. Yet despite a schedule tailor-made to benefit the establishment candidate and confer an early victory, we are, somewhat miraculously, in the midst of the most contested primary race in twenty-four years. We are all Iowans now.

EDITORIAL

This state of affairs is thanks almost entirely to the campaign of Barack Obama, who, because of his background and his relatively brief time in the national spotlight, is a truly improbable contender for the presidency. This magazine has been critical of the senator from Illinois for his closeness to Wall Street; his unwillingness to lay out an ambitious progressive agenda on healthcare, housing and other domestic policy issues; and for postpartisan rhetoric that seems to ignore the manifest failure of conservatism over these past seven years. But as Christopher Hayes argued in our cover story last week, Obama has also exhibited a more humane and wise approach to foreign policy, opposing the Iraq War while Clinton voted for it, and has been a reliable progressive ally over the course of his career. While his rhetoric about "unity" can be troubling, it also embodies a savvy strategy to redefine the center of American politics and build a coalition by reaching out to independent and Republican voters disgruntled and disgusted with what the Bush era has wrought. Most important, we feel his candidacy, in its demonstrated investment in organizing and grassroots activism as well as his personal appeal, represents the best chance to forge a new progressive majority. For these reasons we support Obama for President.

Obama's brand of grassroots politics should serve him well in the coming weeks. He has already galvanized a new class of supporters, delivered on the promise of turning out new voters and raised an astonishing amount of money from hundreds of thousands of small donors. In the February contests in caucus states, he can leverage his superior organizing, and in liberal primary states like Maryland and Wisconsin, he can leverage his progressive support in the wake of John Edwards's exit. But the Obama coalition is relatively weak among Latino voters, as well as among the core Democratic constituencies of the elderly and the working class, who are most focused on bread-and-butter basics: making the economy work for the nonrich. As a moral and political imperative, he would do well to seize the mantle of equitable redistribution and broad economic security for those who live their lives on the precipice of bankruptcy and disaster.

While some will fret about the effect on the eventual nominee of a prolonged battle, the upwelling of small-d democratic enthusiasm in this primary—all those impassioned e-mails, phone calls, canvassing sessions and Facebook postings—has reaped real results: record turnout in the first four contests and on Super Tuesday. While the GOP appears to be on the verge of nominating old war(mongering) horse John McCain, Democrats will likely remain divided, and that's quite all right. Primaries are more than just the means of choosing a nominee; they are an opportunity to weave together networks capable of pushing the country, inch by inch, in a new direction. There's nothing quite like the novel experience of casting a meaningful vote to stoke the aspirations and energies of citizens of conscience. As we move toward November, we'll need all the energy we can get.

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NEWS & ANALYSIS

John Nichols: The First Latino President?
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Tom Engelhardt: Exit Poll
Katrina vanden Heuvel: Stopping a Convention Train Wreck

NATION POLL

What's the best outcome as Clinton and Obama battle for delegates?

RADIO NATION

Dissecting Super Tuesday

VIDEO NATION

Ari Berman on Superdelegates

California Dreaming

"I've got a little piece of California in me," averred Barack Obama, staking a modest claim to what was rapidly emerging as the most precious piece of real estate in Super Tuesday's primaries. The state's First Lady was far more effusive in her assessment. "If Barack Obama was a state, he'd be California," declared Maria Shriver in a fit of Kennedyesque munificence. "I mean, think about it: diverse, open, smart, independent, bucks tradition, innovative, inspiring, dreamer, leader."

COMMENT

At the time, Shriver's endorsement seemed prophetic, offered as it was at the ultimate "girl power" rally, headlined by Oprah Winfrey and Michelle Obama, aimed at Hillary Clinton's most treasured constituency in the heart of what has long been considered—next to New York and Arkansas—her political backyard. With Ted Kennedy barnstorming across the state, wooing Latino voters in execrable Spanish, and a flurry of polls repeating the now-familiar election-eve pattern of surging Obama momentum, the Clinton "firewall" was beginning to look precarious. In the end, however, conventional wisdom and established strength triumphed at the ballot box. It was about women and Latino voters, after all, and they came out in large numbers on election day to award Hillary Clinton the state by a ten-point margin.

In many ways the California results marked the triumph of tribalism, with each constituency—blacks, Latinos, women, blue-collar workers, Asian-Americans, the young and the old—picking its side. But lost in the horse-race punditry, which thrives on slice-and-dice demographic calculations, are the darker implications of such herdlike behavior for both candidates.

According to the exit polls, women—55 percent of the primary voters—favored Clinton by a staggering 59 to 34 percent over Obama. Hillary's estrogen base is undoubtedly an unqualified asset for her campaign. (No one, for example, worries that having so many women supporters makes her the "female candidate.") But few are paying attention to the flip side of that gender equation. When it comes to gender gaps, the candidate who should be worried by the California results is Clinton, not Obama.

On the face of it, men seemed to split almost evenly between the two candidates, but the numbers (skewed by her across-the-board Latino support) disguise a disconnect with white men, who chose Obama by an astounding twenty-point margin. And California's male pro-Obama tilt reflects a national 50-to-44 percent split in his favor.

This male gender gap isn't new. "In particular, Hillary Clinton seems to turn off younger and moderate to conservative male Democrats. As many as one in five of them say there is no way they will support the former First Lady for the nomination," wrote the Pew Research Center's Andrew Kohut in his explanation for the strong pluralities of men who voted for Obama in Iowa and New Hampshire. This resistance, however, if it persists, bodes ill for Clinton's future, especially in a general election, where women traditionally play a less decisive role. As Linda Hirshman recently pointed out in the *New York Times*, "With the possible exception of 1996, women

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Noted.

GUEST STAR No. 2: In January TheNation.com launched a rotating guest blog, **Passing Through**, featuring monthly stints by some of America's most celebrated political bloggers. Next up is **David Roberts**, the senior staff writer at **Grist.org**, an online journal of green politics and culture. He blogs there daily, even obsessively, mainly on politics and energy. He also has a monthly column on green business in *Fast Company* magazine. Look for David's posts on our website through February.

ELECTORAL MATH: The race for the Democratic nomination, as we've been reminded over and over, is a battle for delegates. Going into Super Tuesday, **Barack Obama** led **Hillary Clinton** by sixty-three to forty-eight pledged delegates. As we go to press following a twenty-two-state bonanza, the margin between the candidates was practically the same—or possibly tighter. On Wednesday morning, the Obama campaign claimed a twenty-eight-delegate lead, 910 to 882. The Clinton camp said it was up by five. CNN put Obama up thirteen. It takes 2,025 delegates to clinch the nomination. Prepare for a long ride.

Between February 9 and February 12, five states—along with DC and the Virgin Islands—will hold primaries and caucuses, awarding 475 delegates. Polling has been scant in the upcoming contest, but Obama retains an advantage in a number of states, including Louisiana and the so-called Potomac Primaries of Maryland, Virginia and DC. The Virgin Islands, with a whopping nine delegates, is too close to call. If the Democratic nominee isn't clear after that, the delegate-rich states of Wisconsin (February 19), Ohio and Texas (both March 4) will loom even larger. If the race stretches into April, Pennsylvania's 188 delegates could prove decisive.

Or not. Factor in the party's elusive "superdelegates"—the 842 unpledged party operatives and elected officials not chosen by primary voters but by the Democratic establishment—and Clinton retains an estimated ninety-delegate advantage. The superdelegates can switch allegiances at any time, making an unpredictable race even more, well, unpredictable.

And then there's the tricky predicament of Florida and Michigan, stripped of their delegates by the Democratic National Committee but eager for a say at the convention. Clinton "won" the two meaningless primaries and wants her share of what would be more than 300 delegates. After skipping both contests, Obama has been forced to defend the party's rules. With every delegate more critical than the next, the national party will face pressure to broker a preconvention agreement. Paging **Howard Dean**. ARI BERMAN

JUDICIAL ACTIVISM: According to a Google News search conducted on February 6, **Richard Honaker**, President Bush's latest radical nominee to the federal bench, has not been mentioned even once by a major newspaper, TV or radio station, or Internet news site this month.

This is a shame, because citizens deserve to know that Honaker is far outside the mainstream when it comes to reproductive rights and freedoms. He's devoted a good chunk of his career to fighting to deny women access to safe, legal reproductive-health services. He tried and failed—three times—to pass a state law banning abortion in Wyoming while serving in that state's House of Representatives. He has publicly stated that abortion is "wrong, and no one should have the right to do what is wrong." No *stare decisis* for him.

Honaker seems much more activist than jurist, given his public dismissals of the decisions of US District Court judges as unimportant and forgettable. Not surprisingly, **Steven Ertelt**, the leader of **Right to Life of Wyoming**, is giving Bush major props for the nomination: "Because of his pro-life views and past efforts to protect human life, it's obvious that Richard Honaker joins with attorneys on both side [*sic*] of the abortion debate who understand that Roe v. Wade was an example of unadulterated judicial activism and that the role of the courts to is [*sic*] interpret the law—not make it up as you go."

Moreover, beyond Honaker's documented hostility toward a woman's right to choose, his statements about how certain religious views should influence legal analysis call into question his ability to apply the law without prejudice and with appropriate respect for and deference to precedent.

Honaker's nomination is expected to come before the Senate Judiciary Committee very soon. The Jackson Hole **Star-Tribune** recently reported that Honaker's sponsor, Senator **Mike Enzi**, is hoping the nominee will get an early 2008 hearing. NARAL has made it easy to register your opposition to Honaker's nomination. Visit the group's website to implore your senator to vote against Honaker's appointment. He's just too extreme. PETER ROTHBERG

MOVEON FOR OBAMA: In the run-up to Super Tuesday, **Thomas Hargis** made 267 phone calls asking people to vote for **Barack Obama**. But he never hit a campaign phone bank.

Hargis was one of thousands who stepped up during this decentralized phase of the race, when candidates can barely visit most states, let alone organize them. In an unusual move, Obama's field program empowers volunteers to call voters on their own. That approach got a boost February 1 from **MoveOn**, which voted to endorse Obama over **Hillary Clinton** by a forty-point margin (70 to 30 percent). In a four-day blitz, the netroots group gave its members phone numbers for likely voters in primary states, information about Obama and YouTube videos of a stump speech, and recommended messages for a web-driven "Endorse-O-Thon." Activists made more than 50,000 calls to MoveOn voters in Super Tuesday states and sent 455,228 endorsement notes to their contacts—the kind of personal, local appeals that campaigns often orchestrate in earlier small-state primaries.

There is even more time to mobilize voters in the next round of primaries. MoveOn boasts one out of ten primary voters in Maryland. In Virginia, it has about 70,000 members—that's 17 percent of the turnout for the state's 2004 primary. Now, those voters will hear not only from operatives and political telemarketers but from their fellow antiwar netroots activists across the nation, asking them to stand up for a candidate and a movement. ARI MELBER

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have never voted a candidate into the White House when men thought the other guy should win. In the 2004 election, there was a gender gap in virtually every demographic—among old folks, married people, single people, squirrel hunters—but the gender gap still did not offset the robust men's vote."

Part of the reason is that men tend to lean Republican, unlike women, who make up an increasing share of the Democratic electorate. As Hirshman reveals, women also constitute a significant chunk of swing voters, with 62 percent of them identifying themselves as "purple or moderate." But given Obama's predominance among independents, there is as yet no evidence that Clinton will be able to attract enough female swing voters or Republicans in November to offset a male anti-Hillary bias. Women voters may be able to deliver her the Democratic nomination, but they won't be able to carry her all the way to the White House. For better or worse, if Clinton is the first female presidential nominee, she will have to work harder to build a coalition that bridges the gender divide.

While California points to a potential testosterone gap for Clinton, it offers a cautionary tale about race for Obama. For all the excitement over his strong performance among white voters—helped immensely by his gains among white men—his strategy of "transcendence," which may serve him well within a traditional black-white racial divide, may work to his detriment among other communities.

Take, for example, the Latino vote. After weeks of finger-pointing over white racism, California offered pundits the exotic delight of "ethnic" bigotry—the alleged Latino reluctance to vote for black leaders, a claim belied by the electoral success of African-American politicians, like former LA mayor Tom Bradley.

Obama had no such luck in California, where Latinos constituted an impressive 30 percent of the electorate and chose Clinton over Obama by an overwhelming margin of 67 to 32 percent, echoing the split in the Latino vote across all primaries on February 5. Obama's performance was remarkably poor for a candidate who ran to the left of his opponent on immigration, supporting driver's licenses for undocumented immigrants even at the risk of alienating independents and moderates. For all the talk about his youth appeal and a supposed generational divide among Latinos, he earned a mere 32 percent in the 18-to-29 age group. And no one seems to have paid attention to his equally weak showing among California's Asian-Americans (25 percent to Clinton's 71 percent).

The truly transcendent candidate is not one who merely speaks to white fears of racial difference but who also expresses a multicultural vision of America in all its diversity. In the months to come, Obama's advisers will rightly work on building his support among blue-collar white voters, a continuing weakness of his campaign in particular and the Democratic Party in general. But as long as Latinos and Asian-Americans appear to be an afterthought, simply demographic categories to be dealt with for electoral advantage, Obama will continue to have an unacknowledged "race problem" that has nothing to do with the color of his skin.

The message from the Golden State is the same for Clinton and Obama: they need, in different ways, to craft a more daring politics of transcendence if they want to bridge the divisions that are holding their candidacies back. It's time to rediscover their inner California. LAKSHMI CHAUDHRY

Lakshmi Chaudhry is a Nation *contributing writer.*

Calvin Trillin, Deadline Poet

Mitt Romney, the Power-Point Moneybag, Will Stay in the Race

Though Romney seems beaten he vows to
press on.
He'll battle McCain, he has said, till the last.
He'll spend yet more money for ads on TV—
A stimulus package that he alone passed.

McCain vs. GOP Taliban

On the eve of the Super Tuesday primaries that would confirm him as the front-runner for the Republican presidential nomination, John McCain joined two heretical members of a party that has made itself synonymous with orthodox conservatism—California Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger and former New York Mayor Rudy Giuliani, both supporters of abortion rights, gay rights and reasonably functional government—at a solar technology plant in Los Angeles. They talked about their shared commitment to address global warming. And they reminded everyone that the Republican Party of John McCain is not the Republican Party of George W. Bush or Rush Limbaugh.

COMMENT

While Democrat Barack Obama's remarkable challenge to Hillary Clinton and the Democratic establishment may yet be the essential story of 2008, McCain's march toward the Republican nomination is the year's more improbable journey. Since climbing out of the campaign coffin to which he was consigned last summer when his fundraising fell short, McCain has elbowed his way to the front of the Republican pack with a "coalition" that does not rely on the people who thought they ran the party, winning primary after primary with the votes of independents and self-identified GOP moderates, while the right has divided between country club conservative Mitt Romney and evangelical populist Mike Huckabee. Romney and Huckabee both promise to soldier on, but the former governor of Massachusetts is now widely perceived as having blown a personal fortune on a campaign that was overshadowed on Super Tuesday by the live-off-the-land campaign of the former governor of Arkansas. But Huckabee's win came with a footnote: although he prevailed in his native South, he was barely in the running elsewhere. He's

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still got Mississippi, but after that he's going to run out of states of the old Confederacy. On most maps, McCain looks inevitable.

That prospect enrages the celebrity conservatives, who thought the Grand Old Party was their affair. As the more theatrically than really maverick senator from Arizona began closing in on the nomination, Romney labeled McCain a "liberal" while radio ranter Limbaugh predicted a McCain win would "destroy the Republican Party." Cuckoo-con Ann Coulter said she would campaign for Hillary Clinton over John McCain, a declaration roughly equivalent to the Pope backing Beelzebub over a dissenting Jesuit. Are right-wingers crazy? What could they possibly find troubling about a self-declared "foot soldier in the Reagan revolution" who was the key campaigner for Bush's re-election?

The answer has more to do with that trip to the solar plant in LA than with the particulars of a lifetime American Conservative Union rating of 82 percent, which ought to make McCain entirely acceptable to the right. What distinguishes the senator from other prominent Republicans is what horrifies the party's right flank and makes him the GOP's most viable November contender: McCain tends to accept the idea that there is a mainstream that extends beyond the Fox News Channel's viewership. To a party that has placed a premium on extreme purity—and to commentators who make their money enforcing ideological standards—McCain seems unsettlingly inclusive. He refers to the GOP as "a big-tent party" and signals that he is more interested in filling that tent than in joining the conservative commissars who guard the gate. Asked about Limbaugh's criticisms, this regular Letterman guest replied, "I don't listen to him. There's a certain trace of masochism in my family, but not that deep."

The Limbaughs, the Coulters, the editors of *Human Events* and the *Wall Street Journal*, the tanked thinkers of the Heritage Foundation and the myriad defenders of the right-wing franchise are not used to such disrespect, and they have responded with vitriol so intense that *The Weekly Standard*, which shares McCain's obsession with less jobs/more war policies, refers to the right's "McCain derangement syndrome." It's not an entirely irrational hatred, however. The professional conservatives are losing a fight for their party. Not since Gerald Ford narrowly beat Ronald Reagan for the GOP nod in 1976 has anyone gotten close to being nominated without bowing and scraping at the altar of social, economic and military-industrial conservatism designed by the high priests of the rigid right. Over time, the GOP's range of debate has narrowed so much that Barry Goldwater is now viewed as suspiciously liberal.

The Bush/Cheney years have been characterized by an unapologetic embrace of unyielding right-wing dogmas. Even if they did not govern with the consistency that their rhetoric suggested, the Administration and a pliant Republican Congress did their best to mainstream extremist notions. Along the way, they winked and nodded as a Republican Taliban pursued the ideological cleansing of the party. Senior Republicans deemed guilty of even minor deviations from conservative dictates were denied Congressional committee assignments, dismissed as liberal traitors, booed at state party conventions and even "primaried"—as were Pennsylvania Senator Arlen Specter, who narrowly survived, and Michigan Representative Joe Schwarz, who didn't.

No "Republican in Name Only" has been more consistently distrusted by professional conservatives than McCain. He was too popular in Arizona to challenge in a GOP primary—even if the state's conservative mandarins have campaigned against him this year—and too useful to Republicans in tight races, including Bush in 2004, to push aside completely. But for most of the Bush/Cheney era, McCain has been the definitional RINO, and conservative commentators have memorized his litany of sins: a partnership with liberal Democrat Russ Feingold to promote campaign finance reforms that constrained the gaming of the political process by corporate interests, a brothers-in-arms relationship with fellow Vietnam vet John Kerry, tax-the-rich votes, frequent fights with evangelicals who don't get his sense of humor but intuit that he's laughing at them rather than with them, off-message criticisms of torture, an alliance with liberal icon Ted Kennedy to promote immigration reform—and that break with the Administration on climate change.

McCain is no moderate. His record on social and economic issues was to the right of Romney's until recently, and the former POW's determination to wage wars that give new meaning to the term "quagmire" is striking. He can rant about "Islamofascism" and America as "a Judeo-Christian nation" with the craziest of his conservative comrades. Yet McCain remains a card-carrying member of the centrist Republican Main Street Partnership, which promotes "principled and pragmatic" moderation in a Republican Party where them's fightin' words. "McCain is still viewed by the moderate wing of the party as a savior at this point," notes political scientist Tom Schaller.

That would make his securing of the nomination—if and when he dispatches Romney and Huckabee, whose economic populism scares the "suicide voters" of the Limbaugh/Coulter faction more than McCain's maverick nature—not the end but the beginning of the fight for the soul of the Republican Party. Fully aware that their influence is under threat, political and media conservatives will dog McCain. The fantasy of a third-party challenge from the right will be floated. How McCain responds will be the critical question of the spring and summer. If he starts listening to Limbaugh, his campaign will not be "the end of the Reagan era" that conservatives bemoan but a continuation of the Bush era—and his candidacy will be easily characterized by Democrats as the antithesis of change.

On the other hand, if McCain assumes he will ultimately retain the support of the right—with which he sides on most issues and for which he is the only alternative to an Obama or Clinton presidency—the senator can position his campaign as a break with Bush and, potentially, forge a Republican Party that is more concerned with winning elections than perfecting its ideological pedigree. That's what professional conservatives fear, as they know their influence over such a party would be diminished. But it is, as well, what Democrats must fear. While a more moderate Republican Party might open up the process enough to give meaning to the word "bipartisan" and finally move some old dogmas—like denial of climate change—

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to the fringe, it might also be viable. The Republican Party as defined by George W. Bush and Rush Limbaugh does not stand a chance in 2008. Democrats may be enjoying that party's knives-out fight with McCain now, but they would be wise to hope that McCain makes his peace with the pros and runs as their candidate. A maverick McCain, portrayed however falsely as something other than a conservative, really is the best hope of a Republican Party that may not like the occasionally heretical senator but that cannot possibly win without him.

JOHN NICHOLS

From Guernica to Iraq

A January 21 *Los Angeles Times* article on Iraq that led with an intertribal suicide bombing in Falluja ended twenty-six paragraphs later this way:

"The U.S. military also said in a statement that it had dropped 19,000 pounds of explosives on the farmland of Arab Jabour south of Baghdad. The strikes targeted buried bombs and weapons caches.

COMMENT

"In the last 10 days, the military has dropped nearly 100,000 pounds of explosives on the area, which has been a gateway for Sunni militants into Baghdad."

Similarly, in a *New York Times* article that led with news of an American death from a roadside bomb was this sentence (stashed in its twenty-second paragraph):

"To help clear the ground, the military had dropped nearly 100,000 pounds of bombs to destroy weapons caches and I.E.D.'s."

Both pieces started with "bombing" news, but the major bombing story of these past weeks—those 100,000 pounds of explosives that US planes dropped in a small area south of Baghdad—was simply an afterthought, though this is undoubtedly the most extensive use of air power in Iraq since the US invasion of 2003.

For those who know something about the history of air power, that 100,000 figure might have rung a small bell.

On April 26, 1937, in the midst of the Spanish Civil War, the planes of the German Condor Legion destroyed the ancient Basque town of Guernica. More than 1,600 people may have died there as the Germans reputedly dropped about fifty tons, or 100,000 pounds, of explosives.

At Guernica, as in Arab Jabour seventy-one years later, no reporters were present when the explosives rained down. In the Spanish situation, however, four reporters in the nearby city of Bilbao, including George Steer of the *Times* of London, rushed to the scene of destruction. Steer's first piece was headlined The Tragedy of Guernica and called the assault "unparalleled in military history." As Steer made clear in his report, this had been an attack on a civilian population, a terror bombing. The self-evident barbarism of the event—the first massively publicized bombing of civilians—caused international horror. From it came perhaps the most famous painting of the last century, Picasso's *Guernica*, as well as innumerable novels, plays, poems and other works of art.

Those last tag-on paragraphs in the *LA Times* piece tell us much about the intervening seventy-one years, which included the German bombing of Rotterdam and the blitz of London; the Japanese bombings of Chinese cities; the Allied firebombing of German cities; the American firebombing of Japanese cities; the atomic destruction of Hiroshima and Nagasaki; the cold war era of mutually assured destruction (MAD); massive US bombing campaigns against North Korea, North and South Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia; American air power "victories" during the Gulf War and in Afghanistan; and the Bush Administration's "shock and awe" assault on Iraq in March 2003. In those seven decades, the death toll and damage caused by war have increasingly been delivered to civilian populations.

One hundred thousand pounds of explosives is now a relatively modest figure. During the invasion of Iraq, a single air wing from the USS Kitty Hawk, an aircraft carrier stationed in the Persian Gulf, did that sort of damage in less than a day and, as again in January, the military was proud to publicize that fact without fear of international outrage.

Based on news reports, there is no evidence that American reporters rushed to Arab Jabour to check out the damage. In Iraq and Afghanistan, when it comes to the mainstream media, bombing is generally significant only if the bombs can be produced at approximately "the cost of a pizza" (as IEDs sometimes are), or if the vehicles delivering them are cars or simply fiendishly well-rigged human bodies. From the air, even 100,000 pounds of bombs just doesn't seem to matter.

Some of this comes from the Pentagon's success in creating a dismissive, sanitizing language in which to frame air power. "Collateral damage" stands in for the civilian dead—even though in modern warfare, collateral damage could be considered dead soldiers, not the ever-rising percentage of civilian casualties. And death, of course, is delivered "precisely" by "precision-guided" weaponry. All this makes air war seem sterile, even virginal.

Reports have nonetheless seeped out of the region indicating that there were civilian casualties, possibly a significant number of them; that bridges and roads were "cut off," farms and farmlands damaged. According to Hamza Hendawi of the Associated Press, Iraqi and American troops were said to have advanced into Arab Jabour through "smoldering citrus groves."

But how could there *not* be civilian casualties and property damage? After all, the official explanation for this small-scale version of "shock and awe" was to "take out known threats before our ground troops move in"; that is, to minimize US casualties by using massive firepower in a situation in which local information was guaranteed to be sketchy at best. Given such a scenario, civilians will always suffer. And this, increasingly, is the American way of war in Iraq.

Last year enormous media attention was focused on the President's "surge" plan for Iraq, those 30,000 additional ground troops. What went almost unnoticed was the air surge that accompanied it. The Pentagon has invested billions of dollars in building up an air-power infrastructure in and around Iraq, including constructing one of its largest foreign bases anywhere on the planet, north of Baghdad. Balad Air Base has been described by *Newsweek* as a "15-square-mile mini-city" with air traffic "second only to London's Heathrow Airport." With about 140,000 tons a year of cargo moving through it, the base is "the busiest

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If hard drugs such as heroin or cocaine were legalized would you be likely to use them?

99% SAY "NO."

Zogby International asked that question of 1,028 likely voters. Ninety-nine out of 100 said "No." Only 0.6 percent said "Yes."[1]

Drug War advocates have always insisted that addiction would explode if drugs were legalized. But that argument comes apart under the weight of the evidence. While a poll can't predict actual drug use, it clearly shows that most of us avoid hard drugs because of common sense – not fear of arrest.

And that's always been the case. At the beginning of the last century when a virtual free market for drugs existed, use rates were lower than they are today.[2] Drug use and addiction – along with crime, violence and corruption – only began to climb after the advent of drug prohibition in 1914.[3]

Isn't it time to end the War on Drugs? Let's turn addiction problems over to the people who dealt with them effectively before 1914 – doctors, nurses and health care professionals.

Common Sense for Drug Policy
www.CommonSenseDrugPolicy.org www.DrugWarFacts.org
www.ManagingChronicPain.org www.MedicalMJ.org
www.TreatingDrugAddiction.org
www.info@csdp.org

1. Zogby America Poll of Likely Voters 10/24/07 thru 10/27/07, "If hard drugs such as heroin or cocaine were legalized, would you be likely to use them?" sponsored by StoptheDrugWar.org, full results and other info online at http://stopthedrugwar.org/legalization. 2. Speaking out against drug legalization, US Drug Enforcement Administration, from the web at http://www.usdoj.gov/dea/demand/speakout/06so.htm and Courtwright, David T., "Dark Paradise: A History of Opiate Addiction in America" (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001), p. 9; 3. Courtwright, "Dark Paradise," 2001.

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aerial port" in the Pentagon's global domain, housing about 40,000 military personnel, private contractors and Pentagon civilian employees. It has its own bus routes, fast-food restaurants, sidewalks and two PXs that are the size of Kmarts.

Radar traffic controllers at the base now commonly see more than 550 aircraft operations a day. And the base is still being upgraded to sustain years of further wear and tear, while a $30 million "state-of-the-art battlefield command and control system" is being built there. National Public Radio's defense correspondent Guy Raz called the base "one giant construction project."

At the same time, air power has been surging in Iraq. There were five times as many US airstrikes in 2007 as in 2006; and 2008 has started off with a literal bang from those 100,000 pounds of explosives dropped south of Baghdad, not to speak of 16,500 pounds of explosives reportedly dropped north of the Iraqi capital and possibly another 14,500 pounds on Arab Jabour more recently. (And that doesn't include unreleased figures for the Marine Corps.)

So here's the simple calculus: overstretched US forces simply cannot sustain the ground part of the surge much longer. Most, if not all, of the troops who surged into Iraq will soon be coming home. But air power won't be. In the Vietnam War, as ground troops were withdrawn, air power ramped up. There is every reason to believe that this will be the US future in Iraq as well.

Unfortunately, the air war is not visible to most Americans, largely because mainstream US reporters, who have covered every other form of warfare in Iraq, simply refuse to look up. Only one reporter, as far as I know, has even gone up in a plane—David Cloud of the *New York Times*, who flew in a B-1 on a mission over Afghanistan. Among others, Thomas Ricks of the *Washington Post* traveled to Balad Air Base and did a superb report on it in 2006. But few reporters have bothered to hang out with American pilots. Nor have the results of bombing, missile-firing or strafing been much recorded in our press. The air war is still largely relegated to passing mentions of air raids, based on Pentagon press releases.

Given the importance of air power to American military history since 1941, this is something of a mystery. A Marine patrol rampaging through an Iraqi village can, indeed, be news; but American bombs or missiles turning part of a city into rubble or helicopter gunships riddling a neighborhood is, at best, tag-on, below-the-fold material.

The predictably devastating results of pilots "bombarding" a major Iraqi city, if reported at all, will be treated as the normal "collateral damage" of war as we know it. In our world, what was once the barbarism of air war, its genuine horror, has been transformed into humdrum ordinariness (if, of course, you don't happen to be an Iraqi or an Afghan), as unremarkable, and as American, as apple pie, and nothing worth writing to Mom and the kids about.

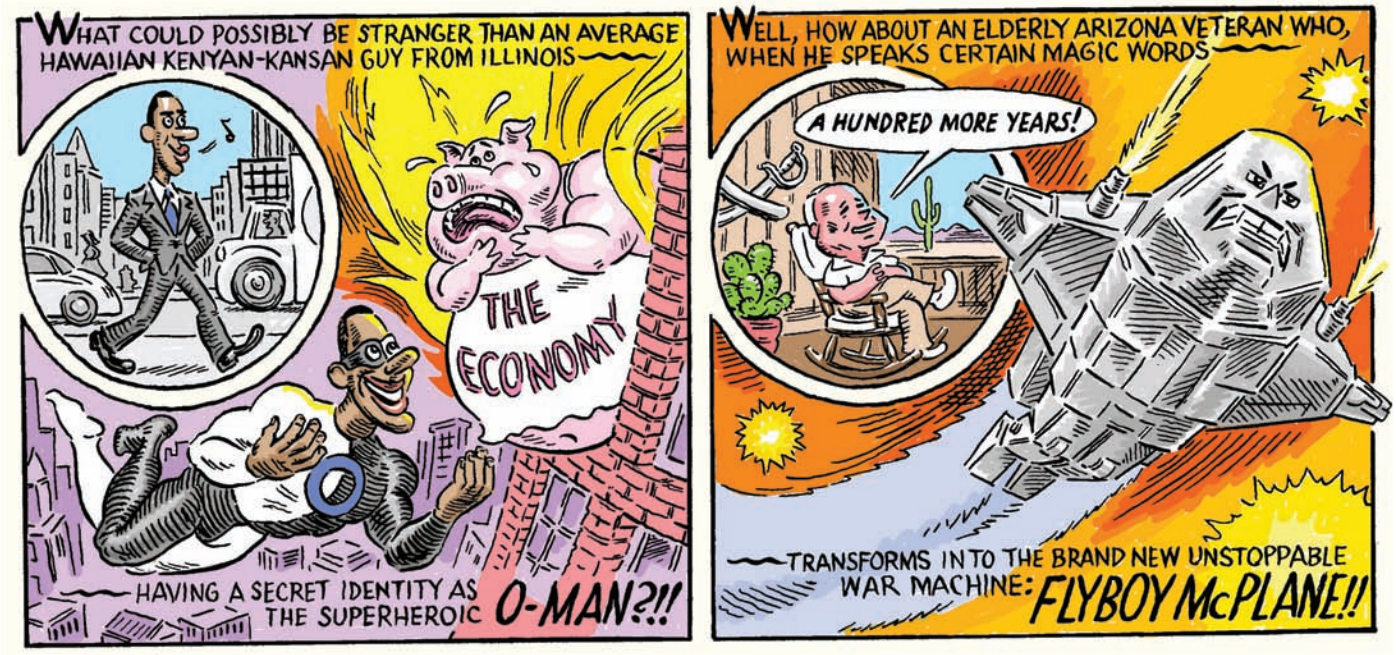
Maybe, sooner or later, American mainstream journalists in Iraq (and editors back in the United States) will look up, notice those increasing contrails in the skies, register those "precision" bombs and missiles landing, and consider whether it really is a ho-hum, no-news period when the Air Force looses 100,000 pounds of explosives on a farming district on the edge of Baghdad. Maybe artists will once again begin pouring their outrage over the very nature of air war into works of art, at least one of which could become iconic and travel the world reminding us just what, almost five years later, the "liberation" of Iraq has really meant for Iraqis. TOM ENGELHARDT

Tom Engelhardt, who runs The Nation Institute's Tomdispatch.com, is the author of The End of Victory Culture *(Massachusetts), now in a newly issued edition that deals with victory culture's crash-and-burn sequel in Iraq. A longer version of this piece appeared on his website.*

Comix Nation

METAMORPHOSIS

by ROBERT GROSSMAN


WHAT COULD POSSIBLY BE STRANGER THAN AN AVERAGE HAWAIIAN KENYAN-KANSAN GUY FROM ILLINOIS
THE ECONOMY
HAVING A SECRET IDENTITY AS THE SUPERHEROIC O-MAN?!!
WELL, HOW ABOUT AN ELDERLY ARIZONA VETERAN WHO, WHEN HE SPEAKS CERTAIN MAGIC WORDS
A HUNDRED MORE YEARS!
TRANSFORMS INTO THE BRAND NEW UNSTOPPABLE WAR MACHINE: FLYBOY McPLANE!!

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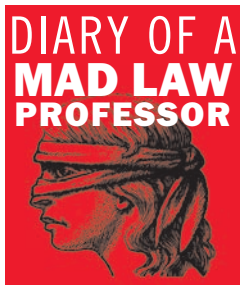
Patricia J. Williams

Movin' On Up

Super Tuesday was, according to one radio commentator, "the Super Bowl of politics." Now that we've crested the mountaintop, transcended race, trounced gender stereotypes and broken through the old glass ceiling, I guess there's nothing left to do. Yawn. What's left to dream, after all? Time for a nap.

Dream No. 1: The doctrine of pre-emptive war is tackled by the doctrine of pre-emptive peace. Pandora appears out of nowhere, but she's all over the gridiron. She blocks the evil twins, Torture and Guantánamo—she's got them by the legs! She headbutts them back into the box! And the crowd goes wild.

Dream No. 2: Barack Obama is extolling the love, fortitude and courage of the woman who raised him "as a single mother." At first, the crowd imagines he's said "black single mother." There is a pause, then a quick reconfiguration. Oh, yeah, *his* single mother was white. It startles. As the throngs look at one another in wonder, they begin to see Lebanese-American single mothers and Taiwanese-American single mothers and Irish-American single mothers. They see that black single mothers—even the ones on welfare!—have a lot in common with all kinds of other mothers. Working mothers of all stripes are magically gilded with halos around their heads, illuminated as those who perform the hardest juggling acts, whose devotion is tested every minute of every day and who still don't earn but seventy cents for every dollar a man earns. Close-up of awe-struck faces as this realization hits a broad swath of the population. Voters decide not enough is trickling down from Enron and the oil companies. They join to revise the distribution of tax benefits; they join unions; they lobby for quality daycare. Eyes spill tears of appreciation and contrition. All boats start to rise.



Dream No. 3: Bill Clinton's hospital bill for coronary bypass surgery is accidentally sent to Gill Clinton of 96 Rocky Road, Red State, USA. Gill Clinton's insurance company has refused to pay, and before he realizes that it's a case of mistaken identity, Gill takes a look at the sum and his heart skips more than a few beats. When he revives, he begins to wonder what on earth he would have done if his moment of hyperventilation had been a real heart attack. He Googles the British and French healthcare systems to find out how much such an operation would cost there. Suddenly he doesn't care whether "Hillarycare" is "socialism": he wants to know the specifics. He takes a look at each candidate's proposals. He begins to fear Mexicans crossing into the United States less than what might happen if Canada were to stop US citizens from slipping over the border in search of low-cost prescription meds. He decides to sneak in a little cardiovascular exercise by canvassing the neighborhood on behalf of universal coverage.

Dream No. 4: Slate columnist Richard Kahlenberg insists that Barack Obama is the embodiment of why race-based affirmative action is no longer needed. As the words spill from Kahlenberg's pen, a glorious parallel universe opens up. Young black men are suddenly able to hail cabs with ease. Real estate agents cannot keep up with the demand for dee-lux apartments in the sky. Swedish models apply for welfare as *Vogue* publishes its first all-Chadian issue. People stop speaking exclusively of the "white-black gap" in educational achievement and become concerned about the general state of American education when they realize that less than half the students in *any* racial group—Asian, white, black or Latino—perform at or above the level of "proficient" by the time they reach twelfth grade. James Watson declares that black people have bigger feet *and* bigger brains. Trees and houses and the harmony of true integration bloom in the Lower Ninth Ward of New Orleans. White people throw down their saxophones in biologically determined frustration.

Dream No. 5: Britney Spears is still speaking in tongues, but after Super Bowl Tuesday, we are all able to understand her. She says that were she not a celebrity, not rich, not really-really talented and not white, she'd be doing hard time as a drug offender—and that the average federal sentence for drug felonies is around five years. She points out that the United States has the highest rate of incarceration in the world, inching toward the rate at which Stalin threw people into the gulag. She points out that around a quarter of the more than 2 million people in the correctional system are there for drug offenses and that nearly 75 percent of those are black or brown. She says that in California, where she lives, twenty-one prisons were built from 1984 to 1996, but only one new university. She admits that she is a very sick person. She says that there are a lot of sick citizens like her, a lot of depressed, addicted, overwrought, less-than-rational decision-makers, but that they shouldn't be jailed. She expostulates that it costs billions a year to incarcerate drug offenders. She thinks we should spend more of that money on mental healthcare. Because these words flow from Britney while she is wearing a pink wig, a Dooney & Bourke Metallic Mambo handbag and little else, the whole country listens with unusual attentiveness. And lo, there is a roar of political pressure to re-examine the legalization and medicalization of addictive drug use, to rethink determinate sentencing, to stop arresting minorities in numbers disproportionate to the number of passes given Lindsay Lohan, as well as to start a forced re-education camp for the parents of child stars.

Dream No. 6: John McCain is laughing in triumph. Lightly mocking Senator Obama's inspirational rhetoric, he says his victory means that "children in Arizona will be inspired to hope that they can be President of the United States." Somewhere beyond the ballroom of the Phoenix Hilton, little Navaho, Apache, Yaqui, Hopi, Paiute and Mohave children listen to his words. Visions of Jack Abramoff, Ralph Reed and Republican bosses with their pockets stuffed with stolen tribal money dance through their heads. The children are inspired to run for President. They turn their young faces to the horizon and see a great horse named Irony trotting across the desert toward them, saddled up. The horse is smiling kindly. Music swells to fade. ■

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Eric Alterman

'Love Me, I'm a Liberal'

Here we go again.

Four years ago, *National Journal*, using comically flawed methodology, calculated that John Kerry was the Senate's "most liberal" member. Today they've decided it's Barack Obama. What happened next was like clockwork: ABC News's *The Note* introduced the story as "one of those titles Obama could live without" because, well, you know… it kind of sounds like "leper." Covering a rally for the Illinois senator, an *Oakland Tribune* reporter quoted Republican National Committee spokesman Paul Lindsay observing, "Barack Obama claims to unite the country, but his new distinction as the 'most liberal' member of the Senate confirms that he's only uniting the extreme left-wing of the Democrat Party."

"It's true enough that this is a moment when the Democrats are called upon to reject extreme liberalism (whatever that might be) and to embrace moderation," Michael Kinsley sagely observed four years ago, "but that is only because every moment is such a moment." "This is basically not a liberal country," explained John Harris, then political editor of the *Washington Post* and now an editor of the professedly apolitical tip sheet Politico.com, in May 2005. "It's a conservative country."

Well, that's that.

Space precludes a complete recap of all the problems with the MSM's assumptions here, but let's start with the fact that *National Journal* rankings are nonsense. Obama is not "more liberal" than Bernie Sanders, Russ Feingold or Ted Kennedy, as any sentient individual could attest. The fact that Obama finished number sixteen three years ago, and number ten two years ago, implies that he moved sharply left during his presidential run. But the truth is, he merely missed a lot of votes. *National Journal* did not distinguish between important votes and silly ones, however, and so the missed votes skewed the results beyond recognition. Had the magazine used the far more respected ranking system devised by political scientists Keith Poole and Howard Rosenthal, Obama would have ranked around number eleven this year and number twenty-one in the previous Senate.

Of course, that's not going to matter come November. "Senator Kerry is rated as the most liberal member of the United States Senate, and he chose a fellow lawyer who is the fourth most liberal member of the United States Senate," George W. Bush joked four years ago. "Back in Massachusetts, that's what they call balancing the ticket." Kerry ran away from the label, telling *USA Today* about the "Massachusetts liberal" tag: "People know it's a lot of malarkey." So, alas, did John Edwards. Asked by ABC's Ted Koppel, "Are you a liberal?" he responded, "No. I don't believe in labels, first of all. I don't think they mean anything. I think what John Kerry and I are is mainstream America."

As I like to think I demonstrate almost to death in my about-to-be-published book, *Why We're Liberals: A Political Handbook for Post-Bush America*, if you look at issue after issue, whether economic, social or foreign-policy related, the majority position is actually the "liberal" position. One needs to add caveats when it comes to abortion and perhaps national security, but even here the conservatives cannot claim credit for anything more than scaremongering among the American majority.

But therein lies the catch. Scaremongering—as George W. Bush and Dick Cheney have so convincingly demonstrated—is perhaps the only remaining area of conservative competence, thanks largely to media cowed by its transparent tactics.

While many on the left, including Hillary Clinton, prefer to let sleeping words lie and allow the right its victory over "liberal" and thereby adopt the moniker "progressive" in its stead, I think this is a mug's game. The label will be forced on Democrats regardless of their preference, and weaseling out of it will only make them look wimpish, as it did Kerry. Rather than shying away from the L-word, Democrats should embrace it proudly, while ensuring that their definition is the one that carries the day.

In an age of conservative collapse, it needn't be so difficult. Look, for instance, at Jonah "Liberal Fascism" Goldberg. Citing the "most liberal" label for Obama, he seeks to enlist Ted Sorensen in his antiliberal jihad, writing that Sorensen admitted that JFK "never identified himself as a liberal; it was only after his death that they began to claim him as one of theirs." Sorensen's memory notwithstanding, Goldberg's claim is characteristically ignorant and inaccurate. True, Kennedy's relationship to liberals and liberalism was complicated in private, but publicly he took the high road. Speaking to New York's Liberal Party in September 1960, Kennedy proclaimed, "What do our opponents mean when they apply to us the label 'liberal'? If by 'liberal' they mean, as they want people to believe, someone who is soft in his policies abroad, who is against local government and who is unconcerned with the taxpayer's dollar, then…we are not that kind of 'liberal.' But if by a 'liberal' they mean someone who looks ahead and not behind, someone who welcomes new ideas without rigid reactions, someone who cares about the welfare of the people—their health, their housing, their schools, their jobs, their civil rights and their civil liberties—someone who believes we can break through the stalemate and suspicions that grip us in our policies abroad, if that is what they mean by a 'liberal' then I'm proud to say I'm a 'liberal.'"

Obama has not yet responded to the *National Journal* survey, but his campaign spokeswoman, Jen Psaki, has taken the smart, Kennedyesque tack. "The Democratic Party needs to nominate someone who shows a clear contrast with where Republicans are, on issues like the war in Iraq and the economy and the influence of lobbyists on Washington," she explained. "One of the reasons he's received such strong support is because he's drawn the starkest contrast on those issues."

Say it, Barack. Say it loud, and say it proud… ■

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ANN HEISENFELT/ ASSOCIATED PRESS

Homeless in New Orleans

by LIZZY RATNER

Even by New Orleans's forgiving standards, the church at the corner of South Derbigny Street and Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard is a startling monument to decay and neglect. Once a gaudy Spanish-style structure, it was abandoned several years ago after its eccentric owner was murdered and now hovers like some creepy Stephen King creation over one of the city's roughest neighborhoods. In front stands a torchless replica of the Statue of Liberty, a pair of Mardi Gras beads dangling from her crown, while inside, a jumble of busted tiles, fire-charred debris, mold and electrical wires fill the empty rooms. An inscription etched beneath a small statue of Jesus in the main chapel promises better times to come: "Now indeed you have sorrow, but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice."

This message of hope, however, did not seem to have reached the 42-year-old man who lay on a dingy foam pallet on the second floor of the church one crisp November night. Skinny and scraggly-haired, with a rumbling, freight-train cough, he gave his name as Salvador and said he had come to New Orleans a year ago to join the teams of immigrant laborers working to rebuild the city. At first he had made enough money to rent his own room, but somewhere along the way day labor had become scarce, and in October he lost his place. He had been sleeping on the floor of the church—sometimes alongside other Mexican workers, sometimes by himself, always with the rats and mice—ever since.

Salvador is part of the growing ranks of homeless men, women and children struggling to survive in New Orleans—a group that has swelled from roughly 6,000 people before Hurricane Katrina to an estimated 12,000 today (a conservative figure, according to some homeless-services providers). Like Salvador, many of these newly homeless are migrants, either from other states or other countries. But many are native New Orleanians who returned to their city only to find that rents had soared and the city's already meager safety net had been shredded. With nowhere to sleep and few social services, they have resorted to whatever makeshift shelter they can find: abandoned houses stalked by rats, park benches patrolled by police, bushes, underpasses, cars and, until recently, a sprawling tent city that sprang up in July in front of City Hall. At its height, it had more than 250 residents.

"This is a Dickens novel that we're dealing with right now," said Don Thompson, executive director of the Harry Tompson Center, which is part of a consortium of Catholic groups providing some of the few daytime services to New Orleans's homeless. "It's like *A Tale of Two Cities*."

A Tale of Two Cities or just about any chronicle of destitution and despair that was written before the rise of the welfare state. In post-Katrina New Orleans, in which every opportunity has been taken to pulverize—and then privatize—New Deal legacies like public housing and government-run social services, homelessness is the inevitable endpoint for thou-

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sands. It is the bitter past relived as an all-too-ugly present where modern-day Twists and Nicklebys make their way alongside 80-year-old men and 6-year-old girls, paranoid schizophrenics and former prison inmates, men who work three jobs, women who can't find any jobs and, in one particularly egregious case, a 51-year-old quadriplegic veteran. When he was found by a local outreach worker, he was living beneath the I-10 overpass, his wheelchair parked beside the doubled-over comforter that served as his bed.

"Poor people just have not been the priority in this recovery," said Martha Kegel, executive director of Unity of Greater New Orleans, the lead agency for a consortium of more than sixty groups working to end homelessness in the city. "And I think the fact that this situation hasn't been treated with the urgency it deserves is exactly why we're seeing these huge homeless camps in New Orleans, why so many people are living in abandoned buildings and why so many people are suffering in Third World conditions in the United States of America two and a half years after Katrina."

Overnight, working men and women who have always lived with roofs over their heads have found themselves sleeping with the stars.

Or, at least, why one segment of the city is suffering in such hardscrabble conditions. For another swath of the city—for the New Orleans of Garden District doyennes, booze-happy tourists and moneyed speculators—life has all but returned to jazzy normal. Each night, this New Orleans swings within the decadent fortress of the French Quarter. It simmers amid the mix of old and new restaurants that tempt diners with even more culinary options than they had before the storm—900 in all! And late at night, it slumbers soundly in the occasional luxury apartment building.

Indeed, just this month Donald Trump and his partners announced that they have begun selling units in the Trump International Hotel and Tower New Orleans, a 70-story colossus of glass and garishness that is expected to rise over the city's central business district. Billed as the "number one address for elegant living" and the tallest building in the city, it dwarfs in scale—and certainly in price—any single multifamily affordable housing development attempted thus far.

"It is five-star, the top of the line," boasted Irene Rand, director of sales for the Trump "condotel," which, she said, will offer some 725 hotel suites and condominiums starting at $400,000.

Back among New Orleans's dispossessed, life on the streets has turned increasingly ruthless. Overnight, working men and women who have always lived with roofs over their heads have found themselves sleeping with the stars and fire ants, while the most vulnerable—those with chronic mental illnesses or addiction disorders—have fallen deeper into the ravine of homelessness, with fewer ways out. When the Federal Emergency Management Agency evicts some 6,400 residents from Louisiana's remaining FEMA trailer parks this spring, the problem will likely get worse.

For many, the most glaring reason for their homelessness has been the persistent shortage of affordable rental housing in a city that was once a renters' town. Before Hurricane Katrina, more than half of all New Orleans residents rented their homes. But since the flood destroyed some 52,000 units of rental housing, fair-market rents have ballooned an average of 46 percent, floating right out of many working people's grasp.

Suddenly the fair-market rate for efficiencies shot up from $522 a month to $764, while the rate for one-bedrooms jumped from $578 to $846, according to the Greater New Orleans Community Data Center. Meanwhile, advocates and renters report that many of the more affordable apartments have nearly doubled in price—and not because they've been gussied up. As one frustrated apartment seeker said, these houses are still the same bug-infested dumps as before the hurricane—utilities (which have also skyrocketed) not included.

"Rent's gone up sky-high since the storm," said Kimberly Barrow, a 22-year-old single working mother who spent nearly a year hopping among friends' houses and a shack in someone's backyard before finding temporary housing through Hope House, a small nonprofit. "So we was bouncing. I felt like a ball, from house to house to house."

The federal government might easily have stepped in to ease people's suffering, either instituting rent controls—as every advocate and service provider interviewed for this article suggested—or providing far heftier incentives than it actually did for developers to rehabilitate affordable rental housing.

Instead, Congress and the Bush Administration did much the opposite. Rather than pour money into restoring New Orleans's devastated rental housing stock, Congress channeled 85 percent of all Road Home program funds to homeowners—a far more "desirable" demographic than renters—leaving a paltry 15 percent to rehab rental housing. At the same time, the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) chose to bulldoze some 4,500 relatively unscathed public housing apartments. The result is that the funds allocated by Washington's recovery gurus to rebuild the Gulf area are expected to restore only 43 percent of Louisiana's rental apartments—and only 37 percent of the city's most affordable rental housing, according to PolicyLink, a national advocacy group promoting social and economic justice.

"Homeowners have really been prioritized over renters," said Annie Clark, a PolicyLink program associate who helped produce several reports on the New Orleans housing crisis. "But also, in general, there has not been enough money to rebuild housing in New Orleans or the Gulf region."

As for local leaders, they have sometimes seemed less interested in resettling the poorest Katrina survivors than in finding ways to keep them out of their neighborhoods. In numerous instances, from eastern New Orleans to Westwego, elected officials have pushed bans on building multifamily apartment

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complexes—measures that would effectively freeze poor, often African-American renters out of those ZIP codes. In fact, in one particularly revealing instance, the lily-white St. Bernard Parish passed a "blood-relative" ordinance in 2006, which made it illegal for single-family homeowners to rent to anyone who wasn't a member of the same near-and-dear gene pool. It was only after the Greater New Orleans Fair Housing Action Center filed a lawsuit accusing the parish of discrimination that it agreed to suspend the ordinance.

Nor is affordable housing the only necessity that's evaporated since the storm. Basic social programs have also gone the way of Katrina's 145 mile-per-hour winds, turning New Orleans's historically flimsy safety net into a doily.

A case in point: before the storm, New Orleans—which has never had anything resembling a department of homeless services, let alone a publicly supported shelter system (the shelters are mostly run by churches)—limped by with some 2,800 shelter beds, of which only 837 served as emergency (as opposed to long-term or transitional) placements. Now the total number of shelter beds has fallen to roughly 2,045, the number of emergency beds to 505, and yet homelessness has doubled. Some of the shelters, like the Salvation Army, even charge a fee.

As for mental health and detox services, forget it. With the shuttering of the city's storied Charity Hospital and the scattering of its therapist class, spontaneous self-healing seems to be many needy New Orleanians' best hope. "We have so many people right now who have mental health issues, and there's no mental health services available. A lot of these people are self-medicating, and it's just snowballing," said Clarence Adams, the assistant administrator of the Ozanam Inn, one of New Orleans's four major homeless shelters.

Like the flooding of New Orleans itself, the city's homeless crisis is not something that just happened. It's a man-made catastrophe, in this case a crystallization of the many manufactured ravages of the "rebuilding" effort—from poor planning and incompetence to the gutting of the New Deal and especially perhaps the planned "upscaling" of the city.

From the very beginning, the city's business and political elites, along with their friends in Washington, have treated the rebuilding effort as a grand experiment in social re-engineering—a chance to landscape the city with a different "demographic." "Only the best [public housing] residents should return," declared HUD Secretary Alphonso Jackson in April 2006. It's a sentiment that has been echoed by everyone from local businessmen to 504Cracka, a commenter on the *Times-Picayune* website, whose suggestion for solving homelessness was gleefully cruel: "Move them to Park Island," he (or she) said, referring to an upscale island neighborhood where Mayor Ray Nagin lives.

It's no wonder so many homeless have concluded that they are being reconstructed right out of New Orleans. "If you want my honest opinion, I think that New Orleans is trying to eliminate the people—and the black population—from coming back home," said Raymond Tony Batiste, secretary of Homeless Pride, the grassroots group of homeless people that gave birth to the encampment in front of City Hall. "They don't want

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these people to be able to afford to live here."

Batiste offered this insight as he sat one afternoon in the square in front of City Hall, a patch of trees, grass and garbage that looked remarkably like a modern-day Hooverville but is actually known as Duncan Plaza. All around him, the red humps of tents and bare hides of mattresses blotted the landscape, while ragged men and weary women wandered about after a hard day of minimum-wage work or simply surviving. Some of them had been drawn there largely out of an instinct of self-preservation, a sense that it was safer to sleep among the many than the few. But for others it was an act of protest. They called it a movement.

"Our mission is to end homelessness in New Orleans and to make a difference," said Batiste, who like many Duncan Plaza dwellers had never been homeless before the storm. "Because we're not homeless by choice. We're homeless because we cannot afford what's going on after Katrina." At the time Batiste uttered these words, he and Homeless Pride were entering their fifth month in Duncan Plaza. The encampment had sprung up on July 4, 2007, when a handful of the city's homeless staged an overnight protest that then stretched from days into months and became one of the most visible symbols of the homeless crisis. Throughout the many months that it festered in front of Mayor Ray Nagin's office, however, few members of the city's leadership seemed to notice.

"We say, Hey, Ray, What do you say? We need housing today!" chanted Batiste, re-enacting one of his favorite protest cries. "But he never shows up."

Batiste never did get his wish. Instead, most of the help that trickled into the encampment arrived in the form of nonprofits like Unity of Greater New Orleans, which launched a massive campaign to house all of Duncan Plaza's homeless between Thanksgiving and Christmas. At the time, Unity did not actually have the funds to carry out this campaign—these funds, which had been allocated as part of the Road Home program, were tied up in the Kafkaesque-sounding Office of Contractual Review—but the agency decided to make the push anyway. The impending winter weather supplied the initial incentive. But a second unholy shove came when the state government announced in early December that it was going to cordon off the area and roust all the homeless. The excuse: the demolition of two nearby government buildings (for which the state had not yet obtained demolition permits).

"In some ways it was kind of like a refugee airlift with people begging to get onto the vans going to the hotels," said Kegel, the Unity director, of the monthlong effort to place 249 Duncan Plaza dwellers in hotels, followed by permanent housing.

Down in New Orleans, the evacuation quickly made headlines as the first time so many homeless had been moved so quickly into temporary housing—a feat made all the more astonishing because it was done peacefully, without a marauding horde of police in riot gear. Even more miraculous, the state agreed to begin releasing $3.8 million in Road Home money it owed Unity, and the city joined in with a pledge to donate $260,000.

For Kegel, a no-nonsense woman with a wry laugh, the lesson was obvious: when government decides (or is persuaded) to collaborate with nonprofits, people get roofs over their heads. "The incredible success of the Duncan Plaza evacuation would never have been possible without government," she said. "It showed the power of what a modest but significant infusion of government resources partnered with incredibly dedicated nonprofits can do."

Although that's true enough in the narrowest sense, the full story of the rebuilding effort offers a far less forgiving portrait of post-Katrina social policy. In this postdiluvian reality, nonprofits, not government, often do the heavy lifting. They find homes for the homeless, manage their cases and often front the money for the whole operation while public agencies dither and dawdle.

This unhappy two-step between needy nonprofits and lumbering government agencies has been one of the most persistent narratives of post-storm life. It began as early as two weeks after the flood, when HUD's regional office froze $11.4 million worth of funds to its New Orleans grant recipients, a mistake for which it eventually apologized. Later, the agency refused to give homeless-services organizations permission to pay for repairs to their flooded and storm-thrashed buildings using their regular HUD grants. In fact, until recently, the entity that had given most generously to help the New Orleans homeless recover from the flood was the government of Qatar, which donated $2 million in 2006 to help restore the aforementioned damaged buildings. (In fairness, HUD did provide organizations with some staff support and equipment early on.)

Until recently, the entity that had given the most generously to help the homeless recover from the flood was the government of Qatar.

Even now, a $70 million measure that could provide "permanent supportive housing" to 3,000 elderly and disabled homeless New Orleanians remains suspended in the priority-addled murk of Congress. Permanent supportive housing is an elegant hybrid innovation that offers tenants a mix of affordable housing and on-site social services and is widely recognized as the best tactic for keeping poor people with disabilities housed and stable. Louisiana's Democratic senator, Mary Landrieu, understood this when she introduced the proposal as an amendment to an emergency spending bill in the summer of 2006. So did her Senate colleagues who, in a rare act of bipartisanship, supported it.

But during the back-and-forth of conference committee negotiations, House members booted the measure from the bill. As one source with knowledge of the discussions suggested, some of these committee members felt that New Orleans had already been provided with a handsome chunk of money in the bill and didn't need the extra infusion. (In fact, the money fell short and had to be supplemented with an extra $3 billion.) Other committee members simply didn't grasp the concept of permanent supportive housing.

Eighteen months later the measure has yet to make its way

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out of legislative purgatory, despite the ongoing efforts of both Landrieu and advocates as well as the full support of the Louisiana delegation. Even the state's two ranking conservatives, Senator David Vitter and Governor Bobby Jindal, have given it their blessing. All of which raises the possibility that, as in the days after the flood, when New Orleans's poor and desperate died waiting for help, the city's ill and elderly homeless might be better off waiting for Sean Penn to paddle by and rescue them than for government to do the right thing.

Senator Landrieu has vowed to keep pushing her colleagues. "I have been fighting for almost two years to get the funding," she said through a spokesperson, "and have been assured by Senate leadership that we will be able to include these funds in the next supplemental appropriations bill." No doubt this will be welcome news to many. But even so, one has to wonder: will the measure survive the partisan tug of war that seems bound to break out around the next supplemental appropriations bill—which is, after all, expected to be an *Iraq* appropriations bill?

Indeed, with so much struggle just to win basic services, it's little surprise that many homeless partisans are pessimistic. Few said they foresee the day anytime soon when homelessness is simply a problem, not a Category 5 crisis, and some even predict harder times to come.

And yet, despite all this—despite the brutal fact of old women with dementia and middle-aged men with colostomy bags sleeping every night in Depression-era conditions—New Orleans's advocates keep advocating, and its homeless keep surviving.

"This is new to me. This is not where I want to be," said Byron Turner, 37, a large man nursing a mild case of pneumonia, as he lay bundled under a dome of blankets, beneath the Claiborne Avenue overpass—the patch of concrete and car fumes he'd called home for nearly seven months. In the weeks since Duncan Plaza closed, this area has become the new epicenter of homeless despair. "But I'm basically trying to make it," he said. "I'm trying to make the best out of what I can." ■

The Conscious Classroom

A new generation of educators, frustrated by ineffective reforms, is leading a movement to teach social justice in school.

by ADAM DOSTER

Positioned among smoky factories and aging row houses on Chicago's West Side, the immaculate Little Village Lawndale High School (LVLHS) serves as a constant reminder to community residents of what collective action can produce. Concerned that 70 percent of neighborhood students traveled to different parts of the city for high school, parents organized vigorously for the construction of a new facility in their backyard. After initially approving the plans, city officials stalled construction, claiming that funds had to be diverted to other projects. In response, the community redoubled its efforts, culminating in a nineteen-day hunger strike at the site of the proposed building, referred to by supporters as Camp Cesar Chavez. "Construyan la escuela ahora!" was the protesters' battle cry, and after six long years, the school was opened as promised in 2005.

Aside from the beautiful building, the struggle birthed a new educational environment for Little Village's youth. "The parents kept saying they really wanted our school to teach the values of peace and struggle," says Rito Martinez, the principal of Social Justice High School at LVLHS, "and what the community had to do to fight for the school." One of four small schools housed on the campus, Martinez's social justice school was specifically created to foster basic skills and literacy—as well as critical inquiry—through projects and problems centered on race, gender and economic equity. "There's a combination of self-awareness and the opportunity to become socially conscious," he says. "We're not dogmatic about it…but we give them the opportunity for self-discovery."

EMILY FLAKE

On a fall morning a week into the school year, it's clear that the school's methodology excites the students of LVLHS, 98 percent of whom qualify as low-income. It's Wednesday, which means the kids participate in extended teacher-generated colloquiums focusing on topics that allow students to explore their identity in an academic setting. In a section on student organizing, thirteen high schoolers attempt to define the word "community," brainstorming about their city's assets and problems and how the students can tackle an issue of importance

Adam Doster, a senior editor at In These Times, *is a freelance writer based in Chicago.*

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to them. Down the hall, an enthusiastic teacher focusing on ethnography leads a lively discussion about racial stereotypes in the media as an entree into the idea of hegemony. Hands pop up across the packed classroom as students argue about how advertisements influence the way society views larger populations. As Martinez notes, providing students the flexibility to "explore learning" is something that's generally offered only to kids in affluent districts, yet the practice can be transformational.

While the history of LVLHS's genesis is unique, its approach is not; the movement to link education, social justice and activism is appealing to a growing number of educators and community organizations around the country. Updating successful principles from liberatory education programs of the past, teachers and community members are finding exciting ways to engage a new generation of urban students alienated by mainstream methodologies, something countless reform efforts have thus far failed to accomplish. And as Congress moves to reform or scrap the No Child Left Behind Act, legislators could benefit from studying these new techniques, which have been largely ignored on a national scale.

Successful social justice education strikes a balance between discussion of sociopolitical issues that affect children's lives and academic basics.

Back to the Future

Much of the work that now falls under the social justice education umbrella is grounded in a rich educational lineage dating back more than forty years. Among the intellectual forebears is Brazilian educator Paulo Freire, author of the landmark 1970 book *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. Freire described traditional education as "suffering from narration sickness," in which the hierarchical relationship between teacher and student causes the former to deposit facts into the latter without cultivating an understanding of what those facts mean. He argues that only through a dialectical praxis, or "reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it," will students develop the critical skills necessary to realize their potential as scholars and citizens.

Another equally important influence is the Freedom School movement of the 1960s. In 1964 various civil rights organizations created a network of free alternative summer schools in Mississippi as a means to end the political marginalization of black people by encouraging students to become active in their communities. Divided between an "academic curriculum" that used reading, verbal and writing activities based on the student's own experiences and a "citizenship curriculum" that allowed for discussions about each student's role in the Jim Crow South, the course work was demanding. But more than 3,000 black students of all ages attended that summer, demonstrating the program's appeal.

Twenty-first-century social justice education builds on these models while also emphasizing dialogue and remaining attentive to each student's social environment. "Taking kids' lives as a point of departure and bringing the world into the classroom really does seem to give a context and a purpose that is very motivating," says Stan Karp, a veteran English teacher and an editor of the Milwaukee-based education reform magazine *Rethinking Schools*.

Conservatives, with the *New York Sun* and *City Journal* leading the charge, have denounced the movement for indoctrinating public school students with leftist politics at the expense of general education. But successful social justice education ensures that teachers strike a balance between debating sociopolitical problems that affect children's lives and teaching them academic basics on which they will be tested. A science teacher can plant an urban garden, allowing students to learn about plant biology, the imbalance in how fresh produce is distributed and how that affects the health of community residents. An English teacher can explore misogyny or materialism in American culture through the lens of hip-hop lyrics. Or as Rico Gutstein, a professor of mathematics education at the University of Illinois, Chicago, suggests, a math teacher can run probability simulations using real data to understand the dynamics behind income inequality or racial profiling. These are "examples of lessons where you can really learn the math basics," he says, "but the purpose of learning the math actually becomes an entree into, and a deeper understanding of, the political ramifications of the issue."

Such practical exercises, advocates argue, improve upon the standard approach to youth development, which aims to promote individual success but fails to examine the inequities that inhibit it. "At least to expose people to a structural analysis of inequality and the distribution of goodies in society," says Charles Payne, the Frank P. Hixon Professor at the University of Chicago's School of Social Service Administration, "seems to be one of the more obvious ways that we can do better than we have done." If executed properly, social justice education also lays the intellectual foundation so essential for independent analytical thought while providing students the opportunity to realize their own human agency. In this way, urban students are treated not as burdens to their community but as partners in solving the complex problems that plague their neighborhoods.

The Method Spreads

Social justice education has made inroads inside and outside the conventional classroom setting. Since 1992 the Children's Defense Fund (CDF) has stood at the forefront of this movement, running modern freedom schools in cities nationwide. CDF leaders devised a model curriculum focused on five components: high-quality academic enrichment; parent and family involvement; civic engagement and social action; intergenerational leadership development; and nutrition, physical and mental health. Like their Freedom Summer predecessors, college-age students attend a national training workshop and facilitate coursework at all the schools. Since 1995 more than 64,000 children and families have been involved, including 7,000 children in

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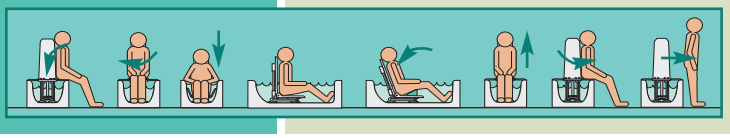

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forty-nine cities in the summer of 2006.

Independent freedom schools have developed as well, each with its own local nuances. In San Francisco, students meet weekly to discuss topics like "Art and Protest" and "Nonviolence and Direct Action." Chicago youth, upon passing a rigorous application process, are actually paid $1,200 to attend an intensive six-week program that highlights sociopolitical consciousness and movement strategy.

Ironically, the rise of public charter schools, which have been promoted by the right and sometimes resisted by education reformers on the left, has been a boon for social justice education. "I don't see how that rapid expansion is possible without the proliferation of small schools and charter schools," says Payne. "They create an institutional opening and a resource base that wasn't there before." Public charter status is valuable because funding is still provided by the government, but teachers are granted more autonomy to experiment with material that some may deem too controversial in standard settings. In New York City alone, more than fifteen charter schools have opened with explicit social justice themes, many of them in the past five years. Chicago, Los Angeles and Oakland have followed suit.

With more education schools assigning the works of Freire and Jonathan Kozol, a growing number of teachers, with the help of local teachers' organizations, are infusing their curriculums with liberatory theories too. One such group is the New York Collective of Radical Educators (NYCORE), an organization of past and present public school teachers founded in 2002 that gives teachers the chance to discuss larger issues of social justice while formulating ways to bring those topics into the classroom. "We find that there are a lot of teachers who are highly politicized, but they are isolated in schools where they are being forced to implement curriculum or policies that are really antithetical to their own belief system," says Bree Picower, a NYCORE member and an assistant professor at New York University's Department of Teaching & Learning. "And we look to try and network those teachers." Teachers 4 Social Justice (T4SJ), a similar group in Chicago, holds an annual curriculum fair where teachers can exchange lesson plans as well as tactics on the best way to teach about injustice in schools that don't explicitly support such activity. "You have to be careful. You have to build allies," says Gutstein, a co-founder of the Chicago T4SJ. "But the reality is that there's always space. There's always cracks."

Perhaps most encouraging, liberatory education advocates from diverse parts of the country are beginning the slow process of organizing. "Oftentimes it's individuals or individual institutions doing their own work," says Tara Mack, director of the Education for Liberation Network. "And it's one of these things where you look up and realize that there are actually a lot of different people who share similar values but haven't necessarily connected with each other." Mack's burgeoning organization—an outgrowth of a listserv of educators, academics and researchers—planned and ran Free Minds, Free People, what many have called one of the most productive social justice education conferences to date. More than 400 participants from across the country convened at LVLHS in June and ran panels, shared resources and discussed the best way to build institutional strength. Other networking groups are budding as well, including Education Action!, a nonprofit created by Jonathan Kozol, and the Teachers Activist Group, a national association attempting to align local organizations like NYCORE and T4SJ.

Breaking Into the Mainstream

In part, the growing interest in social justice education can be attributed to a kind of Bush backlash. Surging inequality and further disinvestment from urban cores to offset tax cuts and military spending have given teachers and activists the impetus to speak frankly to kids about ideas of fairness and justice, even if the President's No Child Left Behind Act has limited curriculum flexibility. "I think it's the…polarization that you see," says Gutstein. "People are talking about things in ways which I don't think I've heard since the 1970s, and that includes education."

But blaming the current Administration misses a larger point. Social justice education is a pedagogy that's reinvigorating educators frustrated with the ineffectiveness of longstanding reform efforts. Despite new focus on the "soft bigotry of low expectations," many urban students remain deeply alienated from traditional methods that seem so removed from their lives. The links between academic and financial success are tenuous at best, and command-and-control testing ignores the critical skills needed to improve the communities that the private sector and government have all but abandoned. In this context, focusing on structural inequality and human development is a compelling alternative.

Despite the new focus on 'the soft bigotry of low expectations,' many urban students remain unengaged by traditional teaching methods.

While difficult to quantify empirically because much of the work is new and geographically localized, the pedagogy has shown humble signs of success. One Philliber Research Associates study found that the reading ability of 1,598 children who attend CDF Freedom School programs in Kansas City "significantly improved," outdistancing similar students, irrespective of whether or not they attended summer enrichment programs. Of the attendees, low-income middle schoolers made the greatest gains. And as those interviewed point out, the anecdotal evidence from students, teachers and parents is overwhelming. "We're rethinking these educational practices across the board," says Mia Henry, director of the Chicago Freedom School. "Because everyone is trying to find a way to do it right."

Social justice education, while growing in influence, has not yet entered the majority of mainstream education-reform conversations. Hunger strikes and protests like those at Little Village Lawndale High School may speed along the process. But if students remain engaged and educators continue to experiment and improve on their methods, it should be only a matter of time. ■

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About Your Professor

Professor Thomas Williams is Associate Professor of Philosophy and Religious Studies at the University of South Florida. He received his B.A. from Vanderbilt University and his Ph.D. in Philosophy from the University of Notre Dame. He has been honored as the Alvin Plantinga Fellow in the Center for Philosophy of Religion at Notre Dame.

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Gimme Shelter

What the New Sanctuary Movement offers, beyond a safe space, for the undocumented.

by SASHA ABRAMSKY

Two young women sit at a table in Rabbi Laurie Coskey's office in a northeastern corner of San Diego. The church pastor in whose house they currently live sits to their left. Around the table are another pastor, the head of a local Quaker meeting and Rabbi Coskey.

The women came to America eleven years ago, when they were children, their parents having allegedly fled political persecution in a country in Eastern Europe. (To protect their identities, they requested that the country not be specified in this article.) They sought asylum status but were denied. They appealed the ruling up to the Ninth Circuit and lost there, too. They stayed in the country anyway. The girls went to school in San Diego; learned to drive, though they could never get driver's licenses because of their illegal status; made friends, almost none of whom know that they are undocumented; got good grades. The oldest was offered spots at top universities—but being illegal and therefore ineligible for financial aid, enrolled instead in a lesser-known, and cheaper, local college, where she declared a major in business administration.

At 6 AM one day this past June, Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents knocked on the family's door. They arrested the father and left behind the mother and her two girls—telling them that they would let the girls finish their semesters in school and university and would then expect them to leave the country, according to the family. The father was taken to an immigrant detention center. Three weeks later, he was deported. The girls and their mother went into hiding to avoid a similar fate.

Desperate, the girls began researching their options on the Internet. Legally, having rolled bad dice in the illegal immigration crapshoot, they'd run out of tricks. Quite simply, they had been unlucky enough to be among the tiny number of illegal immigrants snagged by immigration authorities, and there was nowhere left to turn. Despite having grown up in the United States and never having left the country in the eleven years they had lived in San Diego, they had no right to remain.

"We didn't make a decision to come or not come here," says the younger sister. "We were so young. Our parents made the decision." The sisters stumbled upon references to something called the New Sanctuary Movement, locally coordinated by Coskey and others, and later in the summer they made contact with local religious groups that had pledged to help people in their situation. "They were deer in the headlights," Coskey recalls. "They still are a little bit. They felt sort of raped by the system. It's a terrible word. But they were. They'd just grown up, lived their lives and done everything right, and here they were."

EMILY FLAKE

Within weeks, a local congregation had debated their situation and decided to take them in. "To be Christ in the world was to open my home and invite them in," explains the pastor, who, like the two young women, agreed to talk only on the condition that her identity be protected. "I hear Christ asking me to provide shelter and food and love to someone in need."

While many admire the sense of moral purpose demonstrated by New Sanctuary Movement leaders, some progressive immigration reformers are skeptical of their modus operandi.

"It's a highly laudable cause in many ways, and you can appreciate why they're doing what they're doing," says Muzaffar Chishti, director of the Migration Policy Institute at New York University's School of Law. "But it touches such an incredibly minuscule part of the population. It's more symbolic than meaningful in the lives of immigrants."

Chishti believes, moreover, that it's problematic that New Sanctuary advocates fail to distinguish between civil and criminal immigration cases, embracing individuals who have willfully ignored final deportation orders and who have ended up with criminal cases against them. "There are people who have final notices, know they have final notices, and then they're taking refuge. It gets you in the harboring problem."

It also gets into what is in many ways an even thornier issue: progressives don't like faith-based infringements on the secular political and legal system when conducted by conservatives. How, therefore, does it make sense to claim sacred privilege from the left? "Our legal system," Chishti notes, "does not recognize a church-based sanctuary. We

Sasha Abramsky is a senior fellow at the Demos think tank and the author of American Furies: Crime, Punishment and Vengeance in the Age of Mass Imprisonment *(Beacon).*

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have a separation of church and state."

Yet for all the flaws in New Sanctuary philosophy, its practitioners are highlighting something important: America is a country of immigrants, but in recent years more and more of those immigrants have entered illegally. They have done so not out of a desire to live on the margins and at perpetual risk of deportation but because the current immigration process makes it extremely hard for large numbers of people to migrate legally from countries like Mexico and Guatemala—or, for that matter, from countries such as the one the San Diego sisters came from—while at the same time economic and political factors, such as the way NAFTA has played out, make it extremely hard *not* to embark on a migration journey.

Political leaders bemoan the wave of illegal immigration that has resulted but, until recently, have generally avoided trying to alter the equations that underlie the phenomenon. After all, having a large undocumented worker population has proven rather profitable to big business. And thus the unofficial policy of "Let 'em in but keep 'em on their toes." Add to this mix the ongoing grassroots backlash against illegal immigration, and suddenly there are an awful lot of people who have been living gray-zone existences in the United States for years—oftentimes decades—who are now at risk of a knock on the door from ICE and a sojourn in an immigrant holding facility, followed by deportation. Many of them were brought to the country as children; their primary language is English, their cultural reference points are American, the country they identify with—despite their lack of a passport, valid Social Security number or driver's license—is the United States. Frequently their spouses are legal residents and their kids are American citizens. Deport these people and, in addition to shattering families, you are sending them back to a "home" they have no memories of, no connections to, no chance of succeeding within. It's a lose-lose situation. It's inhumane.

It is primarily in response to this quandary that the New Sanctuary Movement has grown up over the past couple of years. "We're in this for the long haul," says Michael Ramos, of the Church Council in King County, Washington. "There's going to be several years of uncertainty and fear in our immigrant communities. And it's only just that faith communities step forward and provide a measure of hope."

"The philosophy of the national movement is based around providing prophetic hospitality to families in need of it," asserts the Rev. Liana Rowe, a United Church of Christ pastor in Phoenix who coordinates New Sanctuary Movement activity throughout Arizona. "Based on teachings of the prophets in the Hebrew Bible, hospitality and compassion weave their themes throughout most of the major faith traditions in the world."

In the 1980s, as one Central American country after another collapsed into brutal civil war or military repression, churches around the United States began giving "sanctuary" to refugees fleeing the violence. Most of these men and women lacked legal papers, since the United States was reluctant to give refugee status to those fleeing govern-

Good work and happy work for the merry mountain raindrops, each one of them a brave fall in itself, rushing from the cliffs and hollows of the clouds into the cliffs and hollows of the mountains; away from the thunder of the sky into the thunder of the roaring rivers.

- John Muir

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ments deemed "friendly," and once in the United States they existed only in the shadows. Many found their way to progressive churches, and over a period of several years, those church congregations began helping them—providing shelter, voicing moral outrage when the Immigration and Naturalization Service instigated deportation proceedings, organizing transport between hideouts.

Unlike in medieval Europe, sanctuary inside a church carries no legal protections in the United States. But the cloak of religious authority, the aura of sacred space, *does* seem to provide a moral protection, making government agencies that much more reluctant to go after people facing deportation. Sanctuary providers cannot recall one instance in which immigration officers have forcibly entered church property to seize an undocumented immigrant for deportation.

"We have to start with the biblical vision of sanctuary," explains the Rev. Alexia Salvatierra, executive director of the California-based Clergy and Laity United for Economic Justice (CLUE), over herbal tea in a Los Angeles Starbucks. A curly-haired bohemian-looking woman, Salvatierra, who welcomed refugees into her home during the 1980s, lives in the West Side neighborhood of Los Angeles and helps coordinate the state's sanctuary providers. "Sanctuary is a social mechanism written about in the Book of Numbers—for situations in which a person has committed a crime and the response to the crime is inappropriate, cruel and unjust." In the Book of Numbers, sanctuary is proffered to those who have committed manslaughter but are going to be punished for the more serious offense of murder. In ancient Israel, Salvatierra says, there were entire cities given over to providing sanctuary.

Do those fleeing economic destitution have as strong a moral claim as those fleeing the guns and bombs of juntas a generation ago?

In modern times, some religious figures in what came to be known as the Sanctuary Movement were prosecuted in the late '80s on federal conspiracy charges for transporting undocumented individuals across state lines. Among the religious left, these men and women have entered the pantheon of heroes, their actions models for those who today are providing sanctuary to undocumented immigrants. Faith-based groups in California, New York, Illinois, Arizona, Washington and several other states are declaring a similar moral obligation upon their congregants to take in families that risk being split apart by immigration proceedings. As a result, several men and women have entered sanctuary since last January, when the movement coalesced out of a series of meetings held by immigrants' rights groups and social justice organizers nationwide, and many more are in the process of being adopted into sanctuary by local churches, Quaker meetings and synagogues.

In the Seattle area, more than a dozen churches have pledged to take in sanctuary seekers. Scores more places of worship in San Diego, Los Angeles, New York and other immigration hubs have also declared their willingness to host men and women facing deportation.

The poster child for the movement, a woman named Elvira Arellano, was housed in sanctuary in Chicago for months before being arrested and deported while attending an immigrants' rights event in Los Angeles over the summer. Her deportation served as something of a catalyst for activists, and in recent months a large number of congregations have signed on to the New Sanctuary Movement. Those in sanctuary include not only Mexicans but also Eastern Europeans, Haitians and, in New York City, a Chinese family.

Salvatierra told me, "God leads social change through the victims and warriors. Whoever's on the front line, they're the leader and we're in solidarity with them. It's a liberation theology precept."

The central questions are whether those fleeing economic destitution have as strong a moral claim, and whether their religious defenders have as valid a reason to do an end run around secular law, as those fleeing the guns and bombs of juntas did a generation ago. It's an arguable point. The religious men and women of the New Sanctuary Movement have concluded there is, indeed, a moral equivalence, one made all the more urgent by the increasingly unpleasant demonization of "illegals" that has occurred in recent years. And having reached a moral conclusion, the congregations have felt compelled to act rather than to sit back and watch events unfold—displaying an admirable willingness to go to bat for their moral beliefs, absorb criticism and come out (verbally) swinging.

Churches in Long Beach and Simi Valley that have offered sanctuary have been picketed by the Minutemen, as well as California-specific groups such as Save Our State, and their pastors routinely receive hate mail and threats of violence. In Simi Valley, a deeply conservative suburb north of Los Angeles, the city council recently billed the United Church of Christ (UCC) nearly $40,000 for police services after anti-sanctuary groups launched a large protest against the church. The rationale? The congregation had brought the protests on themselves by offering sanctuary to an undocumented immigrant, and thus should be liable for all law-enforcement expenses. None of this has deterred the congregations.

"I think there is a higher law," says Frank Johnson, a retired pastor at the UCC church in Simi Valley. The Simi Valley church looks like a huge, cream-colored stucco McMansion, an utterly functional building on a wide back street, the surrounding hilly landscape a strange mixture of end-of-the-earth shards of desert rock and lush irrigated gardens. In a building just up the hill from the main church, 29-year-old Liliana "Santuario" is living with her infant son, Pablito. They moved from their home in the agricultural town of Oxnard into sanctuary last May, first to a church in Long Beach, then up north to Simi Valley—fleeing an ICE deportation order that would send Liliana to Mexico, from where she migrated close to a decade ago. If deported she would leave behind her three children and her husband (all US citizens).

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"As persons of faith," continues the white-haired, mustached Johnson, "we believe God seeks justice for the people. Whereas in most circumstances we believe it's important to obey the law, there are occasions such as the civil rights movement and people shielding Jews from the Holocaust—all of those things are illustrations of the fact there is a law of love that trumps some laws that exist on the books, if there is injustice. That's why we're doing this."

The UCC people clearly believe their ward can become the new Arellano, and that doesn't necessarily make for the best interactions with the media. Liliana, a beautiful young woman, is always surrounded by handlers. She claims to be keeping a diary, in English, designed to help her learn the language, but the diary, which her handlers urge her to read to me, has clearly been written by a publicist.

"This is a country of opportunity," she reads aloud, her handler correcting her pronunciation. "But where is the love and compassion? When I think of the United States, I think of the Statue of Liberty. Give us your poor and free and huddled masses. I yearn to breathe free."

Liliana's handler looks at her. "Very good. Excellent," she tells her.

The scene is about as authentic as a B-movie script from one of the studios a few miles away in Hollywood. It's a shame because when she's allowed to just tell her story, Liliana is a compelling figure, her terror at being deported away from her three young children and her husband palpable.

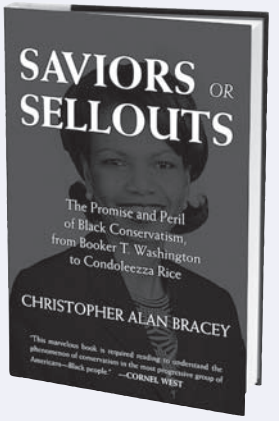
Far more authentic is the scene in the Angelica Lutheran Church deep in the impoverished Pico Union barrio, near downtown Los Angeles. It's a landscape of broken-down old cars, discarded sofas, taco stands and street merchants hawking bags of secondhand goods. Little old ladies in flip-flops wander the streets. Prematurely aged men pause to rest on the furniture left out on the sidewalk.

Angelica is a large, arched, brick building. Originally built for Swedish immigrants, these days it is an evangelical church, presided over by the Rev. Carlos Paiva and attended mainly by Mexican migrants. Ads for the Harvest Bible University adorn its exterior. A small room in the back of the old building, furnished with a TV, couch, fridge and a stove, is currently home to José, a 44-year-old immigrant from Guadalajara, and father of four—the two youngest of whom are US citizens. To the furnishings he has added his clothes, a collection of English-language classes on CD and a few personal items.

José has lived in Los Angeles since 1989, when he paid a coyote $300 to help him cross over from Tijuana. In the years following, he worked several jobs, including truck maintenance at Los Angeles International Airport. He has been facing deportation proceedings since ICE caught up with him in 2004, and he sought sanctuary last February after ICE sent him a letter saying he was to be sent back to Mexico. The first church to welcome him was La Placita; then in September he moved to Angelica.

"Sometimes I feel very alone," he says in Spanish, sitting on a pew under the lush altar, with Paiva translating. "Depressed. It's not easy to be away from my family. I try to feel good. I try to be busy, working. I say prayers here." Paiva adds that José helps with the church's food distribution program to local

"Required reading for all who want to understand the phenomenon of conservatism in the most progressive group of Americans—Black people."
—CORNEL WEST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seniors and also does custodial work around the building.

Given that there are an estimated 12 million undocumented immigrants in America, and the New Sanctuary Movement will only ever directly help a handful of them, its impact, as Chishti argues, is largely symbolic. And given the concerns about church-state separation, it has its problems, even at the level of symbolism. In light of the backlash it tends to provoke, it's also reasonable to ask whether it is always the best strategy for promoting the rights of immigrants. But its practitioners are, at the very least, offering a moral alternative to the overheated, often inflammatory rhetoric of the Lou Dobbses of the world.

Sanctuary advocates are spotlighting a broken immigration system that Congress has signally failed to fix. And they are standing up for downtrodden people in an era in which our patience for poverty and despair has too often been absent. Above all, they are refusing to compromise fundamental values. For all this, they may win public sympathy for their cause and inject a bit more humanity into the frequently callous immigration debate.

"I protest in silence," says Reverend Paiva, in Pico Union. "I protest with a peaceful heart. I protest by working together with Congressmen and politicians to work out a way we can solve this through humanitarian actions. This isn't about one or two people coming from another country. It's about power and the actions that create imbalances between countries. It's a part of the call, part of the mission, of the church. You need to be hospitable, welcome the stranger, help people in unjust situations." ■

Letters

(continued from page 2)

Gizzi Replies

New York City

No surprise that the poems read as though they were written yesterday. West Coast poet Jack Spicer (1925–1965) is one of America's enduring poets, whose work has had a wide and lasting effect on contemporary verse practice, most notably in his conception of the serial form of the book, of dictation and his fierce regionalism. This poem originally appeared in a now long out-of-print volume, *Book of Magazine Verse*, whose cover design simulated an early issue of *Poetry* magazine. Each group of poems therein was directed toward a different journal that, at the time, wouldn't publish his work. Kevin Killian and I are editing a new book of Spicer's poetry, forthcoming this fall from Wesleyan. Stay tuned!

Peter Gizzi, *poetry editor*

Our Christian Nation?

Pittsburgh

I remind Chris Hedges ["Christianizing US History," Jan. 28] that the ideas of the individual, of individual freedom and of freedom of conscience are singularly Christian ideas without which modern democracy is unthinkable. Although our founding fathers were deists, they were nonetheless inspired by Christian ideas.

Alexandra Klarén Seitz

Las Vegas

The question of whether America is a Christian nation was put to rest in 1797 when the Senate unanimously ratified the Treaty of Tripoli, and John Adams signed it. It states "…the government of the United States of America is not in any sense founded on the Christian religion."

Harold R. Barling

Freeing the Campus

Urbana, Ill.

I applaud Michael Gould-Wartofsky's "Repress U" [Jan. 28] on disturbing trends regarding free speech and surveillance on college campuses. Another piece of the story concerns the University of Illinois Police Training Institute. After the *Chicago Tribune*'s July 31 report on PTI director Tom Dempsey's connection with Blackwater, the university terminated its contract with the security firm. Dempsey is no longer employed by the university. This suggests that Blackwater's tactics are still considered unacceptable on campus.

Amber Buck

Literary Delaware

Newark, Del.

I thank *The Nation* for Steve Fraser's review of Delaware author Robert Montgomery Bird's novel *Sheppard Lee* ["United We Scam," Jan. 28]. Fraser noted that Bird shared influences with Poe. Poe often came to Delaware and lectured in Wilmington and Newark. But Bird was not the only Delaware literary artist who shared influences with Poe. John Lofland, who had abolitionist sympathies and championed Native Americans, knew Poe. It was also gratifying to see *Sheppard Lee* thematically linked with Herman Melville.

Delaware author George Alfred, a friend of Mark Twain's, defended abolition and exposed the conspiracies at the onset of industrialization. Charles Wertenbaker found a kind of evil welling up from within the cooking pot of capitalism in two of his major novels, inspired by his living in Delaware.

Delaware had a lot of sister and brother acts: Anne and Dillwyn Parrish, John and Mary Biggs, Charles and Peyton Wertenbaker. John Biggs's Princeton roomie, F. Scott Fitzgerald, lived here for literary atmosphere. Alice Dunbar Nelson and Henry Seidel Canby also lived here. Included in this circle of friends were Paul Laurence Dunbar, H.L. Mencken, Hart Crane and Edmund Wilson, with local writers Christopher Ward and Victor Thaddeus. Not often do our authors and poets get recognition. Thanks again. You really made my day.

Steven Leech
Broken Turtle Books

Eating and Drinking Poetry

Ossining, N.Y.

To this meat eater, Susan Stewart's review of *Selected Poems, 1945–2005* by Robert Creeley seems like a rave review of a vegan diet ["A Human Pledge," Jan. 21]. At the same time I am grateful for it. Close analysis of any poetry—through prisms or magnifying lenses or rose-colored glasses or 20/20 eyes—illumines all poetry. I came away with a better understanding of poets I prefer to Creeley, and that's a compliment to Stewart.

Barbara M. Walker

Lenexa, Kan.

In Susan Stewart's excellent review she says Robert Creeley's "Dam's broke,/ head's a/waterfall" sounds to her "like a hangover." Surely it describes gushing hay fever symptoms. Susan, if that's you after a night of drinking, you might want to upgrade your brand.

Larry Heffel

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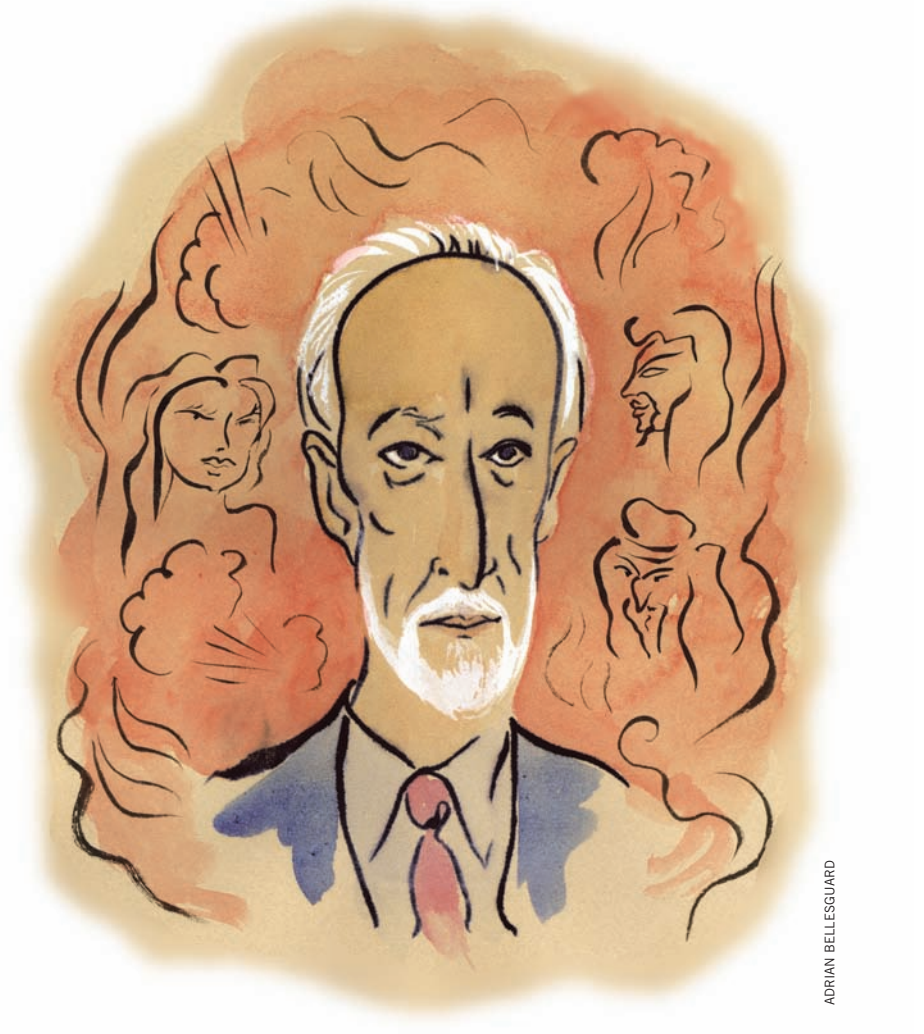
Foes

by WILLIAM DERESIEWICZ



ADRIAN BELLESGUARD

At the top of the page, an argument is being pursued. It is a political argument; right now, it is taking up the rightward drift in Western politics since 9/11. "Next week there will be federal elections in Canada," the voice is saying, "and the Conservatives are tipped to win." In the middle of the page, the author of this argument is writing a letter to his secretary. Not his secretary, exactly—the neighbor he has coaxed into typing his notes. She is young, married, half-Filipina and crushingly sexy, the kind of woman who gives men ideas they can't get rid of. He's paying her three times what the work is worth, but they've had an argument, and she has refused to go on. "*You have become indispensable to me*," the letter begins. At the bottom of the page, the young woman is reporting a conversation she has had with the man she lives with. He has been tapping into her employer's computer, but not because he wants to spy on his private thoughts. He's interested in other things. Like what, she's asked. "Like his finances," he says. Her employer is old, and rich. "Like what is going to happen with his assets after he dies."

We are about halfway through J.M. Coetzee's eleventh novel, *Diary of a Bad Year*, and we have gotten used by now to the ways it wants to be read. The page is divided in three, horizontally, suggesting an archeological dig, or a kind of play, or the layers of the self. At the top, a writer we know at first as "Señor C" is delivering a steady flow of brilliant ideas, on the nature of political life, on the "war on terror," on the slaughter of animals—his contribution to *Strong Opinions*, a collection of meditations by six eminent authors. Beneath that, the writer's thoughts on his typist, Anya. At more than 70, he's too old for lust, or so he believes; the throb she evokes he calls, sentimentally, "a metaphysical ache," "diffuse and melancholy," "something to do with age and regret and the tears of things." Beneath that, her thoughts on him, far less courtly. Anya is vain, profane, contemptuous, cruel. What he calls "a derrière so near to perfect as to be angelic" she calls, shaking it in his direction, "my behind, my delicious behind." (Alan, her crude, sweaty lover, calls it, simply, her "bum.")

The structure establishes a rhythm. We read a few lines of analysis, then two bits of narrative. On each page, three voices, three perspectives, three threads of monologue, picked up and let go in turn. The art is visual as well as verbal. Ironies ricochet from layer to layer: the frustrations of political choice at the top of the page become the frustrations of sexual choice in the middle; the "gamble" of nuclear deterrence becomes the "gamble" of Señor C's offer of employment. At first, each layer is self-contained within its page, but as desires become more exigent and narrative momentum builds, Coetzee starts to violate the integrity of the structure, running first paragraphs and then sentences across the page break, forcing us to read out of sequence, make our own unsatisfying choices. A temporal friction also develops. Señor C tells one side of the story; then, pages later, in Anya's narrative, we get the things he left out. Opinions we read many chapters ago only now register in Anya's consciousness, as she types them up, and in her mocking conversations with Alan.

The young couple have no end of fun at the old man's expense. So out of date, so pompous, so transparent in his feeble lust. Alan is a business hustler who fancies him-

Diary of a Bad Year
By J.M. Coetzee.
Viking. 231 pp. $24.95.

Inner Workings
Literary Essays 2000–2005.
By J.M. Coetzee.
Viking. 304 pp. $25.95.

William Deresiewicz is a regular contributor to The Nation*'s Books and the Arts section.*

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self an intellectual; Anya is sure he'd wipe the floor with her employer in debate. But what else will he do to him? By the time we get to Señor C's letter of supplication and Alan's boast about his spyware, we're worried about what these callous young people might be capable of. We've read Coetzee before, and we know the depths of indignity to which vulnerable old people can be brought, especially aging liberals who think their decency keeps them safe.

There are surprising parallels here with Philip Roth's latest novel. *Exit Ghost* also gives us a love triangle of sapless old writer, beautiful temptress and snorting young bull. Both books announce an exhaustion with the making of fiction, at least on the part of their protagonists. Both allude, in connection with questions of finality, to Hamlet, Roth's novel in its title, Coetzee's in its last lines. Together, the two books point to larger parallels between their authors' work. Both writers have devoted much attention, especially of late, to the experience of age. The literature of old age is a slender one before the nineteenth century, even before the twentieth. *King Lear*, *Oedipus at Colonus* and a few other works stand against the vast literatures of youth and adulthood. But now that writers are living longer and staying stronger, we seem to be entering a golden age of the literature of age, and Roth and Coetzee are perhaps its greatest exponents.

The circumstance points to still deeper affinities. However different the two may be in style, spirit and background, they are both pre-eminently writers of the body—Roth of desire, Coetzee of suffering. The difference helps explain why Coetzee has been writing about old age since before he turned 40 while Roth has come to it only of late. For Roth, old age is the end of what life is all about; for Coetzee, it is the moment when life reveals what it has been about all along. Coetzee revises Descartes's *cogito* to something like "I suffer, therefore I am." "Whatever else," he has said, "the body is not 'that which is not,' and the proof that it is is the pain it feels." Why not, equally, the pleasure? But Coetzee doesn't think that way, however much, were he equally given to philosophical reflection, Roth might.

The underlying similarity between these two amanuenses of the body may help explain still another convergence. Both are autobiographical novelists in the highest sense, writers who interrogate the condition of writing, the labor of drawing material out of the self. This is obvious in the case of Roth, who has worked through this problem by creating authorial figures who teasingly approximate himself. Coetzee, who has remarked that "all writing is autobiography" but who has also called autobiography "*autre*biography," has done it by creating authorial figures who pointedly differ from himself. Roth is interested in the self as subject of fiction: how one's life is turned into narrative. Coetzee is interested in the self as agent of fiction: how one turns life into narrative. Roth seeks to make contact with the self one writes about. Coetzee seeks to make contact with the self that writes. Roth's name for the relationship between the self that says "I" and the fictionalized self is "counterlives." Coetzee's name for the relationship between the self that says "I" and the fictionalizing self—a term he used in his Nobel lecture and, in the singular, as the title of one of his greatest works—is "foes."

Coetzee is interested in the self as an agent of fiction: how one turns life into narrative.

But *Diary of a Bad Year* marks a shift to Rothian procedures. "Señor C" is only what Anya, who mistakenly thinks he's South American, calls her employer. He signs his letter "JC," and Alan tauntingly calls him "Juan." "John C.," then, halfway toward his creator's "John Maxwell Coetzee." The parallels multiply. JC, like JMC, is a divorced South African novelist, critic and retired professor of literature living in Australia. JC, like JMC, has written many volumes, including a novel called *Waiting for the Barbarians* and, in the 1990s, a book on censorship. Both men gave a speech in 2005 at the National Library of Australia denouncing the new security legislation, and both were taken to task by the *Australian*, a Murdoch broadsheet. But there are differences. JMC was born in 1940, JC in 1934. JMC has had two children and lives with his partner. JC is childless and alone. JMC is a Nobel laureate and the only writer to win two Bookers. JC has "a modest reputation."

JC, then, both is and is not J.M. Coetzee, even closer to his creator than Nathan Zuckerman is to Philip Roth. In particular, he seems to represent the ascetic, taciturn, publicity-averse Coetzee's self-conception or inner reality: a little older than he actually is, a lot more solitary, not nearly as big a deal. So, are those "strong opinions," which make up the largest share of the novel and give the chapters their titles ("On democracy," "On intelligent design," "On Tony Blair"), Coetzee's own? Again, yes and no. The whole question of what it means to have opinions, of the relationship one has to one's opinions, is something Coetzee has been wrestling with for a long time, most conspicuously in *Elizabeth Costello*. There's a reason that book, for all its engagement with issues like animal rights and the responsibilities of art, is a novel about a writer who delivers lectures, not the lectures of a writer. "I have beliefs," its protagonist says, "but I do not believe in them." Opinions, for Elizabeth Costello and in *Elizabeth Costello*, are not positions but hypotheses, poetic ideas, arrived at more through the empathetic processes of storytelling than the logical procedures of reason. "She hates sentences that hinge on because," the narrator says. "The jaws of the trap snap shut, but the mouse, every time, has escaped."

It is a very modern thing, this business of having opinions, a need compounded of Protestant individualism and electoral democracy. It is only modern personalities who struggle to develop opinions that are correct and well informed, who define themselves and measure others by the opinions they hold, who read journals of opinion like this one. (I have a friend whose immigrant grandmother wanted to introduce her to a young man. "He's like you," the old woman said. "He's got a lot of opinions.") This "rise of opinions" can be traced across the literature of the last several hundred years. It makes itself felt in *Middlemarch*, for example, and in the difference between Mrs. Wilcox and the Schlegel sisters in *Howards End*. If it has a single point of origin, it is Montaigne, whose essays are Coetzee's clearest models in *Diary of a Bad Year*.

Coetzee's continuing examination of opinion-holding begins there with the tripartite division of the page, which, in the drama it embodies, enacts a kind of metaphysics of the self. At the top, the voice of analytical reason, authoritative, imperturbable, self-contained and utterly oblivious to what lies beneath it. Then, in the middle, the voice of emotion and need, vulnerable and confused, standing apart—literally, graphically—from these strong opinions. The ironies the juxtaposition creates are all too obvious, as Anya is happy to point out: "My guess is he unbuttons himself when I am gone and wraps himself in my undies and closes his eyes and summons up visions of my divine behind and makes himself come. And then buttons up and gets back to John Howard and George Bush, what villains they are." Opinions, in this view, are just a

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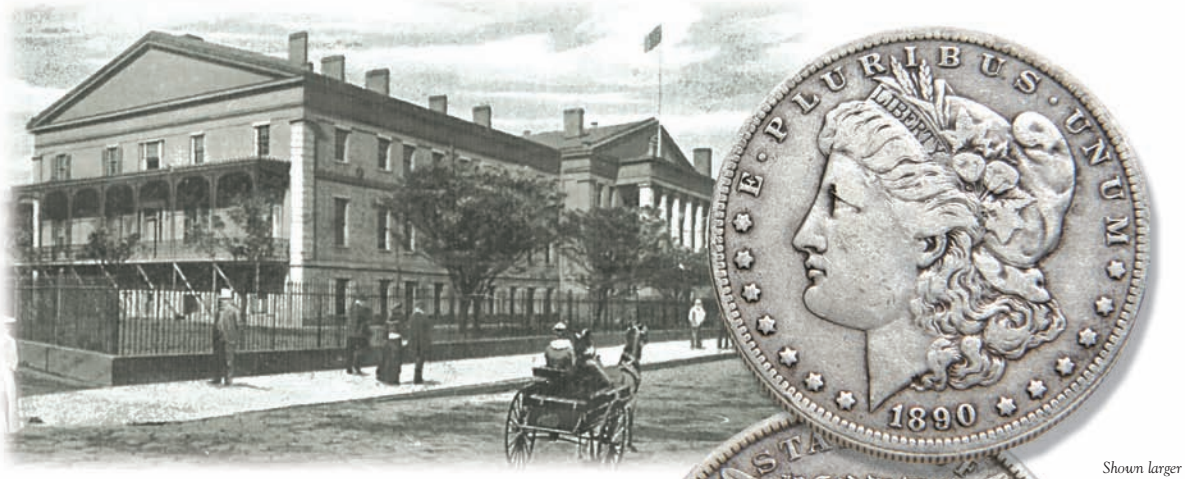

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distraction from what's really going on, the animal making itself feel tall by getting up on its hind legs. Another way to put this is to see JC and Anya as together constituting an allegory of the self. If the text's upper registers represent the head and heart, Anya's voice, its lowermost stratum, represents her favorite body part, the bottom. Or more broadly, as in Rabelais and elsewhere, the body as such, with all its bawdiness, flagrant urges and wicked laughter—the part of himself that JC has lost touch with, the part that feels alien and even hostile to the pretensions of the opinion-making intellect. "His secret aria," Anya calls herself, punning on "segretaria." "His scary fairy."

Yet it is not finally JC's opinions that are being anatomized; it is Coetzee's. That is the ultimate significance of Anya's presence in the margins of these essays, this autobiographical fiction. JC is Coetzee, or a part of him, and so is Anya. If she weren't, he couldn't have brought her forth. "Writing is dialogic," Coetzee has said, "a matter of awakening the countervoices in oneself and embarking on speech with them." And that is exactly what arises, over time, between JC and Anya: a dialogue. At first, they can't even understand each other. He speaks his opinions into a tape recorder and she mishears him, returning transcripts that have "papers and papery" for "Papists and Popery" and "somewhere in the urinals" for "somewhere in the Urals." He thinks she's an ignorant child with her mind in the toilet; she, resenting his condescension, thinks he should write about something fun, like cricket. But gradually they begin to listen to each other. He even allows her to correct an idiomatic error: in Australia, she explains, it is not "talk radio" but "talkback radio." But when we'd come across the term several chapters earlier, it was already in the correct form, which means that that passage, and who knows how many others, already reflect her shaping presence. The phrases in question are emblematic: he talks to her, and she talks back. The "strong opinions" are Coetzee's, but they are conceived, as it were, collaboratively, the brainchild of his disparate voices.

All this helps explain why the essays Coetzee does publish under his own name are so much less interesting than the ones that appear in his novels. His latest collection, *Inner Workings*, gathers five years of literary criticism, most of it written for *The New York Review of Books*. Its twenty-one pieces, on a range of figures from, for the most part, the German and English cultural spheres—Robert Musil, Günter Grass, Graham Greene, Saul Bellow, Nadine Gordimer—are highly intelligent and formidably erudite, but they lack not only the imaginative engagement we might expect from the literary essays of a great novelist (and that we find so abundantly, for example, in Virginia Woolf's) but also the probing brilliance of Coetzee's early nonfiction, which was also much more wide-ranging in form, subject and idiom. The pieces in *Inner Workings* feel, above all, dutiful: a thumbnail biography, some notes on translation, a few pages of analytic summary, often illuminating, occasionally close to pedestrian, always reticent about passing judgment.

Not just dutiful: ostentatiously dutiful. Coetzee seems deliberately to frustrate our desire for rhetorical power and formal beauty, two qualities that literary criticism is capable of possessing in abundance, letting his essays peter out with a minor point or a few cavils about translation or a bibliographic note. If he seems to be writing criticism against his better judgment or at least against his inclination, that may be because he is. In *Doubling the Point*, which combined the early nonfiction with a series of searchingly self-analytic interviews, he complained about "the rather tight discourse of criticism." "If I were a truly creative critic," he went on, "I would work toward liberating that discourse—making it less monological, for instance. But the candid truth is I don't have enough of an investment in criticism to try."

Lacking in rhetorical power, the critical pieces in *Inner Workings* feel ostentatiously dutiful.

Many years later, in *Elizabeth Costello* and now in *Diary of a Bad Year*, he has begun to try. The monologue has become a dialogue. Elizabeth Costello engages a variety of interlocutors in her travels as a public speaker. JC engages Anya, and not just in the sense that she corrects a phrase or two. Their falling-out leads him to re-evaluate "not my opinions themselves so much as my opinion of my opinions." He learns to see them through her eyes, comes to regret their strongness, their hardness. In a postscript to his letter, he promises "a second, gentler set of opinions," more personal, some of which will take up suggestions she has let drop. And that is what we get in the novel's last third, or at least the top third of its last third, essays on aging and boredom and the writer's own father, more narrative in style and generous in spirit. "Soft Opinions," she calls them.

The adjective could apply to the novel as a whole, its ominous title notwithstanding. *Diary of a Bad Year* sets up the typical Coetzeean situation: a white person, privileged but vulnerable (through age or disability or isolation), comes to rely on a person of color, a dependent or inferior of some kind, for sustenance and safety. The scenario, like the prose, is mercilessly spare: two wills face to face, scraping together like metal against metal. In the normal course of things, the white protagonist is inexorably stripped of every comfort and dignity, the bare bones of the human situation exposed with an allegorical directness reminiscent of Beckett.

But here, Coetzee gives us a soft landing. Instead of humiliation and suffering, compassion and communion. He seems to be mellowing with age. His last novel, *Slow Man*, ended in a similarly gentle fashion. It must also be said that after an unbroken string of triumphs that began with his first work of fiction, including a half-dozen masterpieces that establish him, in my view, as the supreme English novelist of the last thirty years and the greatest living writer in the language, these last two works fall short of the spiritual and imaginative intensity—the Dostoyevskian sense of prophecy, to use E.M. Forster's term—that distinguish their predecessors. Like *Exit Ghost*, the new novel might both enact and announce its author's withdrawal from the seas of fiction-making, or at least from its tempests. When Anya asks JC why he doesn't just write a novel, he tells her that he no longer has the endurance. "To write a novel you have to be like Atlas," he says, holding up a world on your shoulders. The new novel is fragmented in form, and its narrative portions amount to the length of a novella. As Roth does in *Exit Ghost*, Coetzee introduces the process of aging not merely into the subject of his fiction but into its very form.

Even if the temperature of the new novel is lower than that of its predecessors, its commitments are the same. Coetzee is and always has been, in the deepest sense, a Christian writer. He has written scorchingly of the Calvinism of his Afrikaner upbringing, but what he has called, in another context, the "Calvinist categorical imperative of absolute urgency and absolute stringency" precisely describes his work. "I am not a Christian," he said in *Doubling the Point*, "or not yet." But what he means by the word is clearly something very different from what passes in the marketplace. The initials "JC" are not de-

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ployed casually in *Diary of a Bad Year*; they signify not Coetzee's belief in his own mission or election but his acceptance of the principle of *imitatio Christi*—the obligation to receive Christ as one's ethical norm. When Coetzee says he's not a Christian yet, he means he still falls short of that unappeasable ideal.

Nothing shows up the blather of the "God wars," on both sides, like this kind of moral seriousness. In the philosophical realm, if not, alas, in the political one, the question of the literal truth of religious ideas is utterly beside the point. For what it's worth (precisely nothing), Coetzee gives no evidence of possessing that kind of belief. What matters is that he regards Christian ideas as spiritual realities, moral realities: heaven, hell, sin, the soul, suffering, grace, redemption, love; Christ and Judas, angels and demons, the thief in the night and the least among us.

Matters are no different in *Diary of a Bad Year*, even if the ratio of salvation to suffering is radically improved. JC and Anya help each other toward a modicum of redemption. She learns to think of herself as something more than an ass with a brain attached, and so does he. Eros gives way to agape, spiritual love, and if the path is smoothed with a little sentimentality, Coetzee allows his characters their small self-deceptions. As in so much of his work, the ethical crux is duty of care—in particular, care for the dead, the one form of kindness that we can never repay, and that saves our bodies when they are all we have left. JC has a dream that comes to haunt him, "about dying and being guided to the gateway to oblivion by a young woman." For the greatest of these is love. ■

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Joschka Fischer, 1974

Green Days

by ANSON RABINBACH

Joschka Fischer and the Making of the Berlin Republic
An Alternative History of Postwar Germany.
By Paul Hockenos.
Oxford. 372 pp. $35.

By any measure, the story of Joschka Fischer's life in politics would be exceptional. After dropping out of high school in 1965, Fischer went on to play a role in German and European society that has no equivalent in American political life. He first made a name for himself as a street-fighting leftist during the early 1970s, only to become a bookseller and taxi driver later in the decade after growing disgusted with the existential and physical excesses of militant politics. He returned to politics in the early 1980s and fast became the Green Party's star candidate. As foreign minister in united Germany's Red-Green coalition government, a position he held from 1998 to 2005, Fischer ended up endorsing German participation in NATO's mission in Kosovo in the late '90s and, just a few years later, vigorously opposing the Bush Administration's dubious call for war in Iraq. Fischer could claim some credit for the modest success of humanitarian intervention in Kosovo, but he chose to keep his distance from those European and American liberals trumpeting humanitarian rationales for Bush's war.

Paul Hockenos believes the twists and turns of Fischer's career tell us a great deal about postwar Germany and "its remarkable transformation from an occupied post-Nazi state into a healthy democratic country." His informed and highly readable account of Fischer's private and public lives is conceived as an "'alternative history' of post-1945 Germany." In that sense, the *Bildungsroman* he has written is less about Fischer himself than the generation of the 1960s and how the alternatives it imagined broadened German democracy and ultimately created a new political identity for the Republic. It's a story line tinged with the spirit of self-congratulation typical of the generation it chronicles. In Germany, former radicals born in the years just before and after 1945 often refer pridefully to each other as "68ers," marking both their unique experience of protest politics and their separation from Germans who came of age during and immediately after the Nazi era. (Hockenos defines the generation of the 68ers broadly, including the Germans who marched for peace in the early '60s, the militant students and activists of the late '60s, the Red Army Faction [RAF] terrorists of the '70s, the pro-ecology and antinuclear demonstrators of the '80s and the Greens.) The German New Left was also fond of referring to itself as "anti-authoritarian," a term that neatly, if somewhat self-servingly, distinguished it from the pro-GDR communists as well as from the previous authoritarian epochs of Hitler and Konrad Adenauer, the austere chancellor of the Federal Republic from 1949 to 1963 and chairman of the Christian Democratic Union (CDU) from 1950 to 1966.

Hockenos tells a lively and well-paced story that neither glorifies nor demonizes Fischer. He is affectionate toward Fischer without being sycophantic; while Fischer's wild weight swings, five marriages and sometimes rude style are part of the story, they are sidelights. The book's main focus is on Fischer's prominent but hardly exaggerated place in the emergence of the Berlin

Anson Rabinbach teaches history at Princeton University, where he also directs the Program in European Cultural Studies.

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Republic. By carefully tracing the vicissitudes of Fischer's career, Hockenos avoids drawing a direct line from his radical militancy and repentance for militant acts to his liberal antitotalitarianism and support of humanitarian intervention. He also emphasizes Fischer's stature as a politician of European dimensions who chose at a crucial juncture to defend not just Germany but the principle of European multilateralism against a belligerent United States. "Islamist terrorism and its inhumane jihad ideology poses a threat to peace and stability, both regionally and globally," Fischer said in a speech at Princeton University in 2003. But he also maintained that "the real strategic response to the deadly challenge of a new totalitarianism" is soft power and persuasion.

Hockenos calls his book a history "from below," which is something of a misnomer since it focuses on movement activists and leaders, not the voices of contemporaries who were well outside the penumbra of the German New Left and whose lives were only indirectly shaped by the era's militancy. Drawing on extensive interviews and newspaper accounts, he explores an "irony that neither the left nor the right could appreciate" when they clashed during the 1960s and '70s. Instead of fomenting a socialist revolution that eradicated the foundations of civic culture in the Federal Republic and established a participatory democracy, Fischer and his cohort had a hand in liberalizing the Federal Republic as it absorbed the former Communist East, moved its capital from sleepy Bonn to sleepless Berlin and became a force in the creation of a unified Europe whose boundaries now stretch from the Atlantic coast of Portugal to the Polish-Ukrainian border. For Hockenos, "the implications of [Fischer's] political odyssey go well beyond Germany—and remain relevant today."

Joschka Fischer was born in southwestern Germany in 1948, just one year before the Federal Republic was created. His parents were *Heimatvertriebene* (expellees), ethnic Germans driven from Hungary and forced to repatriate in Germany after World War II. His deeply Catholic mother hoped he would become a priest or civil servant, anything but follow his father into the butcher shop, where he would die at an early age. In the mid-1950s the Fischers moved to provincial Öffingen, the insular and claustrophobic town just outside Stuttgart where Joschka would spend his adolescent years. Like many of his contemporaries, Joschka became aware of the deep Nazi complicities of many postwar Germans through the highly publicized 1963–1965 Frankfurt Auschwitz trials, which put former SS camp guards in the dock. In the recently published first volume of his memoirs, *Die rot-grünen Jahre* (The Red-Green Years), Fischer recalls that with those trials, "the era of the repression of National Socialist crimes came to an end in Germany and the era of confronting them through criminal law began." It was also in Öffingen that he first heard the American Armed Forces Network broadcasts of Bill Haley, Elvis, the Beatles, the Rolling Stones and Bob Dylan, whose music, he says, put him "on the road to the promised idea of freedom."

During the heyday of the New Left, Fischer nurtured the image of a self-taught working-class tough.

When Fischer appeared on Stuttgart's left-wing scene in 1966, he nurtured the image of a self-taught working-class tough who could hold his own among his peers, many of whom were students and activists who had imbibed the Frankfurt School's Freudian Marxism, would go on to raise their children in "antiauthoritarian kindergartens" and had undertaken, in Rudi Dutschke's famous phrase, "the long march through the institutions." That march would be a hard slog, for during the strait-laced Adenauer years, when the CDU ruled Germany's hidebound parliamentary system, the Federal Republic had been unwavering in its allegiance to the US-led NATO alliance. Nazism, when mentioned, was understood, rather abstractly, as the consequence of Germany's having strayed from the path of liberal democracy and pro-Americanism. If there was to be no return to Nazism, the open democracy and political excesses of Weimar were to be avoided as well. The leaders of both the CDU and the opposition Social Democratic Party (SPD) agreed that for German democracy to succeed, its stability had to be guaranteed by restricting pluralism and maintaining conformity. Politically, the state had to be actively antitotalitarian—a so-called "militant democracy"—which meant eliminating the defeated Nazi option, declaring right-wing extremism taboo, banning the Communist Party and closely monitoring the press. At the same time, at all levels of society former Nazi supporters were being quietly integrated into the new Republic; a few even ended up in Adenauer's cabinet, most notably Hans Globke, who had helped draft the notorious anti-Semitic Nuremberg laws of 1935.

In 1959, just four years after Germany became a full-fledged member of NATO, the SPD abandoned its rhetoric of neutrality, disarmament and Marxist class struggle. Seven years later, under the leadership of the former anti-Nazi exile Willy Brandt, the SPD became a centrist party and joined a power-sharing arrangement with Adenauer's CDU. By this time, the universities had become the home of a new generation of students who, like Dutschke, no longer considered pro-Americanism to be the inviolable foundation of West German foreign policy, especially in light of the Vietnam War and US support of the Shah of Iran. For the German New Left, the American "mass murder" (*Massenmord*) in Indochina was not only equal to the Nazi genocide (*Völkermord*) but also the global extension of the cold war front line that ran right through Berlin.

In Hockenos's telling, it was a death of a different sort—a single death, no less—that spurred students, and Fischer personally, to mobilize. On June 2, 1967, a police officer fatally shot a student named Benno Ohnesorg during an anti-Shah demonstration in Berlin. Hockenos portrays the event as the catalyst for the transformation of a handful of student and church organizations into a mass movement that rallied against what appeared to be a return to the violent, repressive, "authoritarian" and, as some predicted, "fascist" state described by Max Horkheimer, Herbert Marcuse and other Frankfurt School theorists during the 1930s and '40s.

Nearly a year later, in April 1968, the charismatic Dutschke was shot in the face by an unemployed house painter named Josef Bachmann, who had been stirred to act by the relentless "Stop Dutschke Now!" campaign waged in the pages of the Springer publishing house's daily *Bild-Zeitung*. (Though critically wounded, Dutschke survived the shooting.) Tens of thousands of protesters took to the streets all over West Germany, blocking the *Bild-Zeitung*'s trucks. The "grand coalition" government of Kurt Georg Kiesinger responded with a series of emergency laws declaring that constitutional rights may be curtailed. Yet the events of the spring of 1968 also marked the denouement of public protest. Within a year, the New Left had splintered into an alphabet soup of Marxist-Leninist party forma-

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tions, Maoist groups, the pro-GDR German Communist Party and the Frankfurt-based Revolutionary Struggle, or Spontis, a nickname evoking the spontaneity of the masses and inspired by the Italian autonomist movement.

When Fischer and his family moved to Frankfurt in late 1968, he found himself surrounded by radical students of Adorno and Habermas whose dialectical virtuosity he could hardly match. Yet his political career began the moment the Frankfurt Spontis turned to the kind of street politics at which Fischer, unlike the more cerebral leaders of the pre-1968 era, excelled. Among the "actionist" Spontis and other militant groups, Fischer discovered that his talent for sharp rebuttal and formulating plans for direct action more than compensated for his imperfect mastery of the Marxist classics. Not all of his plans panned out. In the early 1970s, he and his comrades in Revolutionary Struggle met with little success when they tried to radicalize the Greek, Italian, Portuguese and Yugoslav *Gastarbeiter* (guest workers) at a huge nearby Opel plant. Fischer then gravitated to condemned houses in Frankfurt's West End occupied by squatters whose clashes with local police often turned into violent street battles that pitted hailstorms of stones and bricks against water cannons and rubber projectiles. Fischer was also part of the Putz Group (literally, "clean-up group"), a crew of battle-ready Spontis, some of whom crossed the line into criminal activity and, in a few cases, terror.

The specter of Nazism infused all aspects of the radical left. Its anti-authoritarianism conflated the Nazi era with the Federal Republic to such an extent that the two were often fused and confused. In 1970 the RAF was founded by Andreas Baader, Ulrike Meinhof, Gudrun Ensslin and other militants to wage an underground war against the "fascist" German state. Perhaps the most twisted manifestation of the German New Left's confusion was its attitude toward violence: it saw no fundamental contradiction between its pacifist stance of rejecting nuclear armament and NATO membership and its support for the anticolonial violence of Third World liberation movements, which it anachronistically regarded as present-day anti-fascist resistance. One aspect of the violent turn of the early 1970s was a growing affinity between some elements of the German New Left—groups such as Red Aid, Revolutionary Cells and Fischer's Revolutionary Struggle—and the Palestinian cause, manifested in trips to military training camps in Jordan and South Yemen. To be truly antifascist was to replace the anti-Nazism of the 1960s with vulgar anti-Zionism and, not infrequently, even outright anti-Semitism. As historian Wolfgang Kraushaar has shown, already in November 1969, a group called West Berlin Tupamaros had left a bomb—which went unexploded—in the Jewish Community House in Berlin's Fasanenstrasse on the anniversary of *Kristallnacht*. A few days later a leaflet titled "Schalom+Napalm" claimed responsibility: "Under the guilt-ridden camouflage of coming to terms with the fascist atrocities against the Jews they [the Federal Republic] are giving decisive help to the fascist atrocities of Israel against the Palestinian Arabs."

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In 1999 Fischer got an earful from Germans disgruntled about NATO in the Balkans.

Hockenos does not dwell sufficiently on this dark chapter and its impact on the German New Left, especially Fischer's close friend and confidante Dany Cohn-Bendit. Affiliated with a group called Palestine-Committee Frankfurt, Cohn-Bendit was a signatory to a declaration issued by the group stating that "Jews in the diaspora can only understand acts of terror such as the one in the Community House in Berlin against the backdrop of their persecution and annihilation as Jews. Certainly Jewish Communities are also centers for the financing of the Zionist state, for which an enormous flow of capital is necessary. Nevertheless, the identification of Jewish institution with Zionist bases is itself racist, one which strengthens rather than weakens the racist state." Just one month later, as part of a five-member SDS (Socialist German Student Union) delegation, Fischer traveled to a PLO solidarity congress in Algiers addressed by Yasir Arafat. Fischer, like many on the left at that moment, was being pulled in opposite directions. The Algerian conclave concluded with a resolution in support of "the armed struggle" of the Palestinians as well as with a categorical rejection of racism, above all in the form of anti-Semitism.

By the mid 1970s, the distinction between the RAF's tactics—bank robbery, bombing, arson—and the kind of "defensive" violence espoused by the Spontis in their battles over squatters' rights was becoming blurred. The Spontis organized support for jailed RAF members while they debated whether to move from defensive to active violence. For Fischer the moment of decision came in May 1976, when he was briefly arrested amid the rioting that exploded when Ulrike Meinhof—the iconic RAF figure who was serving an eight-year sentence in Stammheim prison and was still on trial for various crimes—was found dead in her cell, apparently a suicide (but widely believed to have been a murder). A few days after his release, Fischer addressed a crowd of 10,000 on Frankfurt's Römerberg, imploring them to end the "death trip" and "armed self-isolation" that the radical left had turned into an end in itself. Hockenos doesn't quote the words that reveal Fischer's note of identification with the RAF and his own sense of self-reproach on that day: "We cannot simply distance ourselves from the urban guerrillas because we would have to distance ourselves from ourselves, since we suffer from the same contradiction between hopelessness and blind actionism."

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Fischer narrowly extricated himself from the left's self-destructive spiral, which culminated in the terrible "German Autumn" of 1977, with its hijackings, kidnappings, murders and the suicides of RAF leaders Andreas Baader, Gudrun Ensslin and Jan-Carl Raspe in October. He withdrew from politics, working in Frankfurt's Karl-Marx Book Shop and, for a while, driving a taxi. What finally drew him out of his political torpor was Helmut Schmidt's approval in late 1979 of the NATO "double-track" strategy of deploying a new generation of midrange US missiles to counter Soviet SS-20s. Hundreds of thousands of Germans and millions of Europeans mobilized against the "Euromissiles." The tiny grassroots environmentalist Green Party, established in 1979, emerged as the political vehicle of a much broader pacifist antiwar upsurge—as the "antiparty party," in the words of its founder, the fiery Petra Kelly. Reluctant at first, Fischer joined the party without fanfare in the summer of 1981, nearly three years after Cohn-Bendit began sponsoring a "Sponti Voter Initiative for the Greens." The peace movement of the early 1980s was, as Hockenos quotes a commentator from the time, a "frontal attack against one of the greatest taboos of the postwar period: the Federal Republic's dependence on the United States, its western orientation, and its membership in NATO." For that reason, along with their considerable success in municipal and state elections, the Greens were far more important than the single-digit percentage their national vote revealed.

Joschka Fischer was a butcher's son, a Sponti tactician, a taxi driver—and a reformer. During his early years in the Greens, Fischer also became a pragmatist who saw—as he believed the SPD's Willy Brandt had also seen—a future for the extra-parliamentary left in ruling coalitions between Greens and Social Democrats. Enduring catcalls from hard-line "fundies" (fundamentalists) who accused the "Fischer Gang" of power-hungry opportunism, Fischer brought to the Greens a long-term perspective that eschewed the role of a "fundamental opposition" anchored in the peace and ecology movements and instead embraced the notion of being a parliamentary party whose goal was to create a left-of-center majority. After the Greens (among them, Fischer and his nemesis Kelly) entered Parliament in 1983, the party won seats in six of Germany's federal states (*Länder*) and in 1,400 municipal assemblies, demonstrating that it was neither "unfit to govern" nor bashful

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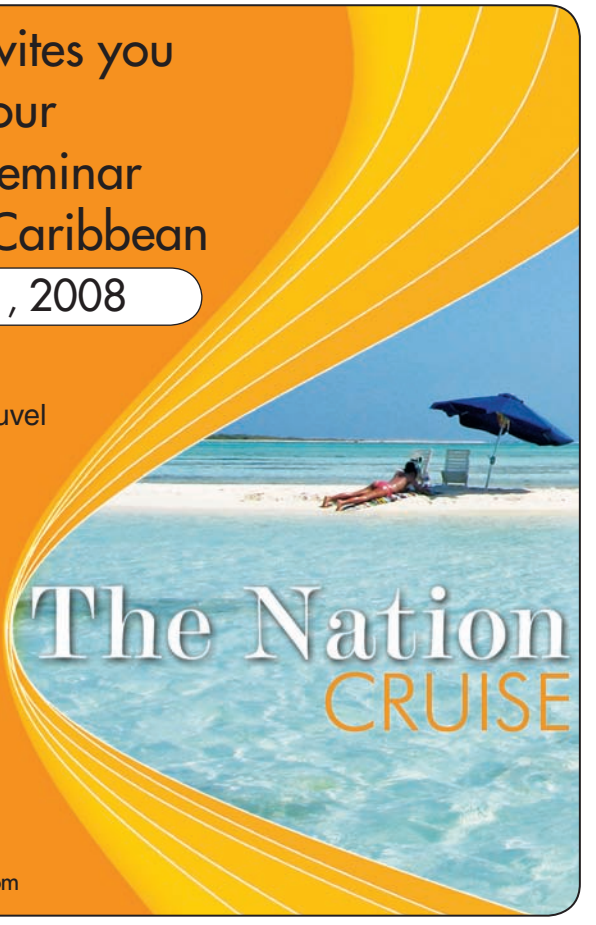

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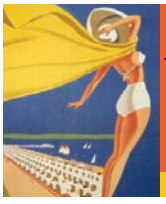
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about hard-boiled power-sharing. In 1985 the bluejeans and sneaker-clad Fischer assumed his first ministerial post as environment minister in a Red-Green coalition in the state of Hesse, earning a reputation as the party's *enfant terrible* but also as a talented debater and political tactician, capable of rising above the fractious parliamentary assemblage of feminists, Spontis, eco-radicals, Christian pacifists and Third World socialists.

Critics on the left and the right contend that Fischer cynically and belatedly joined the Greens to advance his own career, a charge Hockenos dismisses. Fischer joined the party, Hockenos argues, as the result of a "long process that paralleled the metamorphosis" of the New Left. Yet he always remained something of an outsider, despite his increasing prominence and visibility throughout the 1980s. Among the most telling remarks in his autobiography is the admission that "in the years with the Green Party I never felt truly warm—in the sense of an emotional tie, so that I could have a personal sense of well-being or even be at home."

When the Berlin wall fell in 1989, Fischer wrote in the left-wing daily *Tageszeitung* that given Germany's Nazi past, the nation's sovereignty, manifested by the use of its military, had to remain restricted: "This is the real underlying reason for the German question and Germany's division—and we can't ever forget it." For the antiwar Greens, Germany's unification did not alter their party's most fundamental precept—the German army, the Bundeswehr, could not be deployed "out of NATO's area," even for humanitarian purposes. When faced with ethnic cleansing and mass murder in the Balkans, the worst carnage in Europe since World War II, the majority of Greens, Fischer included, continued to insist that military force should not be an option. As Hockenos observes, no one in the party imagined that the postwar imperatives "Never again war" (military intervention) and "Never again Auschwitz" would ever be in conflict. To compromise either of these principles would risk alienating the Greens' antimilitarist and pacifist base. But after the massacre of Bosnian Muslims in Srebrenica in July 1995, Fischer began to challenge Green orthodoxies: "Are pacifists prepared to accept the triumph of brutal, naked violence in Bosnia?" he asked in *Tageszeitung* in August 1995.

Fischer, some said, was putting himself forward to the United States as a reliable future German foreign minister when he equated US military intervention in Europe in World Wars I and II with the situation in Bosnia. In the September 1998 election, Gerhard Schröder's Social Democrats won 41 percent of the total vote, which along with the Greens' 6.7 percent gave the left-of-center Red-Green coalition a majority, ending the sixteen-year chancellorship of Helmut Kohl. As the Greens' star candidate, Fischer not only delivered the necessary votes but demonstrated that the Greens had proved themselves capable of running a professional campaign. In the coalition negotiations, Schröder chose Fischer as foreign minister and vice chancellor, despite—or perhaps because of—the contrast between his own Euroskepticism and Fischer's strong pro-Europe stance. Fischer was a celebrity and, according to the polls, united Germany's most popular political leader. "The long march through the institutions may not have taken the path that Rudi Dutschke envisioned," Hockenos writes, "but its representatives were there, at the helm of the republic, with the opportunity to leave an indelible mark."

Less than two weeks after the election, President Clinton put the not-yet-installed government's feet to the fire; the United States wanted Germany to commit to a NATO-led air campaign against Yugoslavia to force Slobodan Milosevic into halting the Bosnian-Serb assault on Kosovo. The plan lacked a UN mandate. Fischer voted yes, as did Schröder and the outgoing Chancellor Kohl. For the first time in its postwar history, Germany was involved in a war on foreign soil, against a former World War II victim of Nazism, without a UN mandate. And there was no guarantee that Fischer's party would even back him. Some of the 68ers, like writer Klaus Theweleit, accused Fischer and his ilk of playing at "a fake grownupness in stylish suits" to dispel the ubiquitous charge that the Greens and leftists were "infantile" and "childish." To his credit, Fischer persuaded the majority of Greens to support the government (but not before he suffered an ear injury from a paint-balloon hurled at him by an angry protester). He also initiated a successful plan—with Russian participation—to force Milosevic to sign an agreement and end the air war. By 2002 the Bundeswehr was involved in international missions in Afghanistan, East Timor and parts of Africa.

In the rush to the Iraq War, Fischer, in yet another first, balked at following the US lead and resolutely confronted Donald Rumsfeld in Munich in February 2003 with the now famous words, "Sorry, I *am not* convinced. You have to make your case. Sorry, you haven't convinced me!" In that instant,

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Fischer positioned himself as an independent European politician against many of his former fellow European humanitarian interventionists (Bernard Kouchner, André Glucksmann, Adam Michnik) whose moral fervor and misjudgment of George W. Bush led them to support the ill-fated US war in Iraq. Though Fischer's stance (shared by Schröder) was frequently interpreted as German anti-Americanism, Hockenos points out that even when 90 percent of the German population opposed the Iraq War, close to 70 percent in the West and just under 60 percent in the East considered themselves "pro-American." By the time the Red-Green coalition was defeated in the October 2005 election, Fischer could leave office satisfied that the Berlin Republic had favored humanitarian military intervention when necessary yet had also stood its ground against its American ally, even if it meant—as it did—the worst rift between Germany and the United States since World War II.

During his time as foreign minister, Fischer also found himself drawn into a messy domestic battle—a skirmish sparked by revelations about his militant past. In 1998, the year that the Red-Green coalition gained a majority in the Bundestag, Hans Joachim Klein, a close friend and associate from Fischer's street-fighting days in Frankfurt, surfaced from the underground and was charged with murdering three people during a terrorist attack on an OPEC conference in Vienna in 1975. Fischer testified at Klein's January 2001 trial, and the public prosecutor accused him of having harbored a terrorist in his communal apartment. To make matters worse, that same month the newsmagazine *Stern* published a provocative set of photographs from 1973 showing Fischer, clad from tip to toe in black leather, beating a policeman with his fists in a Frankfurt street battle. *Stern* had bought the photos from the journalist Bettina Röhl, the daughter of Ulrike Meinhof.

Violence and betrayal were again in the air, and Fischer's enemies on the right wasted no time in using the Klein trial and the *Stern* photos to put not just Fischer's radical past but the entire 1968 generation on trial. Had not Fischer, like his comrades of that era, downplayed the violence he had once practiced? Did the much vaunted cultural revolution of 1968 presage not the colorful democracy of the 1990s but RAF terrorism and the paralyzing German Autumn of 1977? Even more darkly, did not Fischer's 1969 trip to the PLO congress in Algeria undermine his credibility as an articulator of Germany's special relationship with Israel?

The day after Fischer testified at Klein's trial, these questions were thrown at him in a tumultuous Bundestag session. With his political life at stake, he responded: "For all that we did that was wrong, for all that we have to take responsibility for, apologize for and take our distance from, in the last analysis it was a revolt for freedom with elements of totalitarian violence.... 1968 and thereafter led to more rather than less freedom in this country. That is my position until this day." At once unapologetic and self-critical, Fischer survived the affair.

Hockenos closes his account on an upbeat note. Twenty years after unification, Germans appeared to be proud of their Constitution, the quality of everyday life and the relatively peaceful unification, as well as of Green Party legislative achievements—a more generous citizenship law, an ecology tax and a pledge to exit from nuclear energy. The Bonn and early Berlin Republics were able to keep both "Never again Auschwitz" and "Never again war" firm principles, though not always without making difficult and at times existentially wrenching choices. Hockenos, however, overreaches when he concludes that "Germany's critically minded 'culture of protest' helped win the Berlin Republic the trust of its international allies." Germany's strong footing in new and old Europe did not bring down the curtain on the Atlanticism and *Westbindung* of the Adenauer era. What Fischer added, and what he remains most proud of, is his Europeanism, the realization of Robert Schumann's "great idea of a European Federation," which he refers to in his memoir as "my personal vision of the future." "It seemed that rather than shame his fellow countrymen, Fischer's unorthodox vita flattered them," Hockenos writes. His career proved that Germany had become "more colorful, more liberal, more spontaneous."

Fischer's capacity for spontaneity sometimes prompted him to change course abruptly, such as when he left the Bundestag in 2006. "I don't want to be the Grandpa in *The Muppets Show*," he explained. Such sudden changes make it difficult to plot Fischer's life on a tidy arc or treat it as the representative tale of a generation. His story is only one strand—albeit a thick and knotty one—in the story of the Berlin Republic. In the aftermath of the Red-Green years, much more needs to be said about those who came of age during the 1960s and '70s on the other side of the wall. It is from there, not from Frankfurt or West Berlin, that the present generation of Germany's leaders

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came of age politically. It is hardly a coincidence that in 2005 both of Germany's major parties were headed by former Young Pioneers from the GDR: Angela Merkel (CDU) and Matthias Platzeck (SPD). Paradoxically, the relative calm that characterizes the Merkel grand coalition may be a much-appreciated respite from the turmoil that has always surrounded the 68ers.

For that reason, a crucial dimension missing from Hockenos's history from below is the presence of those Germans whose political lives began after the rise of Fischer and the Greens, and who absorbed the main ideas and ideals of the 1970s without having experienced the anarchism, street battles and shouting matches between environmental fundamentalists and political realists. In the last elections, in September 2005, the Greens won a respectable 8.1 percent of the national vote but failed to win participation in all but a single coalition at the provincial (*Länder*) level of government. Such results suggest that the Greens may have plateaued while a new generation of voters have begun to return to the major parties—or, if one believes Fischer's detractors, that he sapped the dynamism of the party's base while stealing the limelight. Not until the voices of former Easterners and the post-68ers are taken into account will it be possible to judge whether Fischer's exceptional life is also, for Germans, an exemplary one. ■

MOBRA FILMS/ADI PADURETU

Anamaria Marinca as Otilia and Laura Vasiliu as Gabita in Cristian Mungiu's *4 Months, 3 Weeks and 2 Days*

Cool Devastation

by STUART KLAWANS

Film

I could spot only one moment of levity in Cristian Mungiu's *4 Months, 3 Weeks and 2 Days*; and having neglected to master Romanian, I didn't know why it was funny. It happened early in the film, in a scene where a college student in 1980s Bucharest was made to stand at a hotel reception desk as if she were an accused criminal pleading before the bench, when all she wanted was to rent a room for herself and a friend. "What's your friend called?" the clerk muttered in official displeasure, all the while fussing with her paperwork. "Dragut," the student replied. The clerk looked up sharply: another mark against the defendant. "That's her name," explained the student, with an apologetic shrug. "Dragut."

For all the insight it provided, that last subtitle might have read, "Comic misunderstanding here." So, after the screening, I trolled the Internet and to my delight pulled up an Anglo-Romanian website where young people advise one another on the translation of pickup lines. Who knew? *Dragut* can mean "cute." To the ears of petty authority, the name had sounded insubordinate.

My thanks to Romania's pickup artists, and best wishes for their continued success. I hope, though, that my web informants will be careful. If not, they may be left with an ordeal like the film's remaining 112 minutes.

For this is the story of an illegal abortion—or, more precisely, the story of one long day in the life of that student in the lobby, who risks helping a friend get an illegal abortion and then, under pressure, runs the even greater risk of abandoning her. When summarized, this action might sound like an anecdote. As realized by Mungiu, it's more of a paradox: a brilliant misery, photographed with such wide-eyed clarity, acted with such unwavering conviction and unfolding with such ever-deepening suspense that *4 Months, 3 Weeks and 2 Days* convincingly claimed the Palme d'Or at Cannes last year, followed by a string of other awards and festival invitations. Now the film is at last in theatrical release in the United States, allowing American moviegoers to experience its cool devastation, its calmly observed melodrama—and, most of all, its central character, Otilia (Anamaria Marinca), the helping friend, who's stuck being the strong one in a society that wants her to be powerless.

At the very end, you see Otilia sitting late at night in a restaurant, as shown in one of the film's astonishing wide-screen, deep-focus compositions; and as the shot is held and held, you slowly realize that reflections of car headlights are passing across the image. Posed at a window, Otilia is separated from you by a pane of glass—which I suppose links this scene with the film's opening shot, in which fish are shown swimming inside a little aquarium. Granted, Otilia breaks the symmetry of these first and last images when she finally glances through the glass, toward you; but despite this knowing gesture, she remains a creature on display.

You might think of this, too, as a paradox, since this specimen character, though exposed to the world's curiosity, has spent the entire film in clandestine activity. For late Communist Romania, though, this is no contradiction. In principle there are no secrets, since any lecture-hall monitor or hotel clerk is entitled to know Otilia's business; and in practice there are no secrets, since the whole country runs on illicit exchange, which is hidden in plain view.

Mungiu defines Romanian commerce early in the film, lightly if not with levity, when Otilia goes to buy a few toiletries for the chronically dependent Gabita (Laura Vasiliu) to prepare for her abortion. A decent bar of soap can be acquired in their dorm from a student who also deals in Tic Tacs and pirated videotapes. But decent cigarettes can't be found—even when Otilia tries another dorm room, where the black-market shoppers are shown in a wide band that stretches across the screen, as in one of Tina Barney's big domestic photographs. As you look at this array of people involved in their separate transactions, you see not so much corruption as a normal, daily imposture. Everyone relies on this supposedly nonexistent traffic. Even the judicial

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desk clerk manages not to notice the fellow who stands a few yards away in her lobby, selling packs of Kents from his overcoat.

It's from this incidental character that Otilia finally scores her cigarettes, in the last innocently dishonest transaction you will see in the film. After that, it's time for her and Gabita to negotiate with the abortionist, Mr. Bebe (Vlad Ivanov), a balding, clenched, leather-jacketed, briefcase-bearing man of about 40, who is officially a criminal but exudes an authority of his own. He, too, is good at disapproval. No sooner does he have Otilia and Gabita locked inside their little hotel room with the oatmeal-colored walls than he begins to lecture them impatiently, with much waving of his open palm. You'd think his hand was a tray, holding out the common sense and superior experience that young women are too dumb to accept.

Unfortunately, he succeeds in educating them.

Wrenching, harrowing, breath-stopping, abysmal: I grasp for words to describe the central sequence of *4 Months* but come up only with analogies. The scene, in its way, is as outrageous as the seduction of the grieving Anne, right over the casket, in *Richard III*; as pitilessly drawn-out, and clinically precise, as the death of Emma Bovary; as quietly, claustrophobically desperate as the breakdown in the elevator in Chantal Akerman's *Jeanne Dielman*. Voices are raised, just once. At one moment only the camera lurches forward, and you find yourself staring into Bebe's hot face. Otherwise, the trap door opens with smooth, slow-motion efficiency, and a very long rope plays out.

And here's the most terrible part of it: once Otilia drops, she just keeps falling. There's no snap, no knowledge that the worst has already happened, because she next leaves Gabita behind, to go into the twilit streets and pretend to participate in ordinary life. She will sit at a table crowded with middle-aged strangers; she will listen to their seemingly endless conversation about potatoes, Easter eggs and the benefits of military conscription. Young people everywhere are driven crazy by such yammerers; but Otilia, in her moral vertigo, needs especially to get away from them and can't. She suffers through a solid eight minutes of their dinner party in a single relentless shot, followed immediately by seven minutes more of painful, one-on-one confrontation, before finally being able to rush back to the hotel. Whatever catastrophe might await her there she will prefer to this normality.

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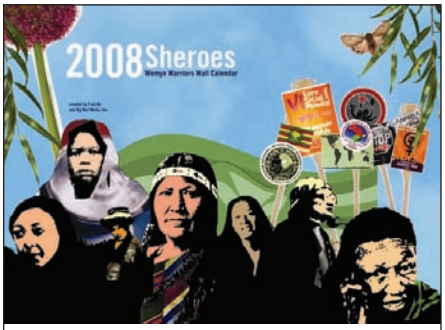
Note the showbiz canniness. For all the formal restraint that Mungiu exercises in this film—a restraint that extends to Marinca's inward-looking, furiously controlled performance and to the deep, steady gaze of Oleg Mutu's cinematography—*4 Months* features the ever-popular devices of a ticking clock, an overbearing villain and a heroine who might as well be tied to the railroad tracks. Sound familiar? These are the same crowd pleasers you find in that other post-Communist prizewinner, Florian Henckel von Donnersmarck's *The Lives of Others*. An evaluation of *4 Months* might as well begin here, with a comparison of the two films' uses of political melodrama.

I think the comparison goes in Mungiu's favor—not only because his style is so much more rigorous and thoughtful but because his melodrama takes place in a world that feels inhabited. Born in Romania in 1968, Mungiu was a student at the time his story takes place. He has even explained, in interviews, that in those days he knew a woman who went through an abortion like this. Out of this experience comes the sense of complicity in *4 Months*—a complicity summed up in Otilia's final glance toward the audience. From *The Lives of Others*, though, you get congratulations. You, Western moviegoer, were never one of those bad, bad Communists; and if you had been, you'd emerge from the movie a good person, as certified by a filmmaker who has imagined East Germany but never lived in it. Thanks for the compliment, but I'll take fear and trembling over flattery.

To get a second standard of judgment, we might look at *4 Months* in the context of other recent movies about abortion. This comparison doesn't take long. Mungiu's film holds up well against Claude Chabrol's exemplary *Une Affaire des Femmes* and Mike Leigh's *Vera Drake*, and as pure filmmaking it towers over Lasse Hallström's *The Cider House Rules*. That's about it for dramas. As for comedies, I can think only of Alexander Payne's *Citizen Ruth* and Todd Solondz's *Palindromes* (both special cases) before descending to *Knocked Up* and *Juno*. The latter film, I admit, has much to recommend it, but it still conforms to the pattern of contemporary American movies, in which abortion may be contemplated only for the sake of not being performed. Lovable characters come no closer to it than "shmashmortion" (as they say in *Knocked Up*). Mungiu's characters, however, have other things to do than be lovable—an industriousness that's entirely to their credit.

The last remaining comparison would be with the other films in Romania's purported new wave—which is to say, *4 Months* has to pass the *Death of Mr. Lazarescu* test. Here, I think, it falls a little short, for reasons that go back to that absence of levity. Cristi Puiu's *The Death of Mr. Lazarescu* has all the fear and trembling, and all the outrage, of Mungiu's film; but at the same time (to quote a better critic than I, Ben Sonnenberg), "it's as funny as Beckett." It's this doubleness of emotion, far more than the protagonist's allegorical name, that allows everything in *The Death of Mr. Lazarescu* to seem greater than its circumstances. By contrast, what you see is what you get in *4 Months, 3 Weeks and 2 Days*. The film may share some of *Mr. Lazarescu*'s traits—its long takes, its satirical edge—but in the end, it gives you gallows humor without the humor.

What a comfort to have it, though. Romania has produced a film as profoundly affecting and beautifully made as *4 Months, 3 Weeks and 2 Days*, and it's still not the best the country has to offer. For people who take their movies seriously, a quick course in Romanian might now be necessary—and so is a trip to the theater to see *4 Months*. It may not be *dragut*, but it's awfully good. ■



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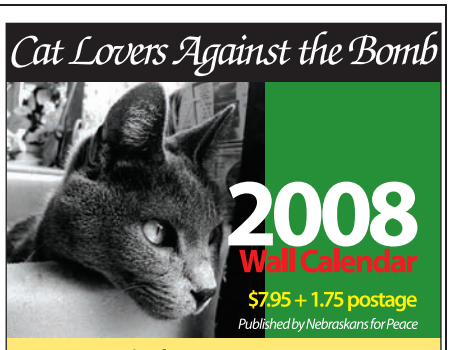

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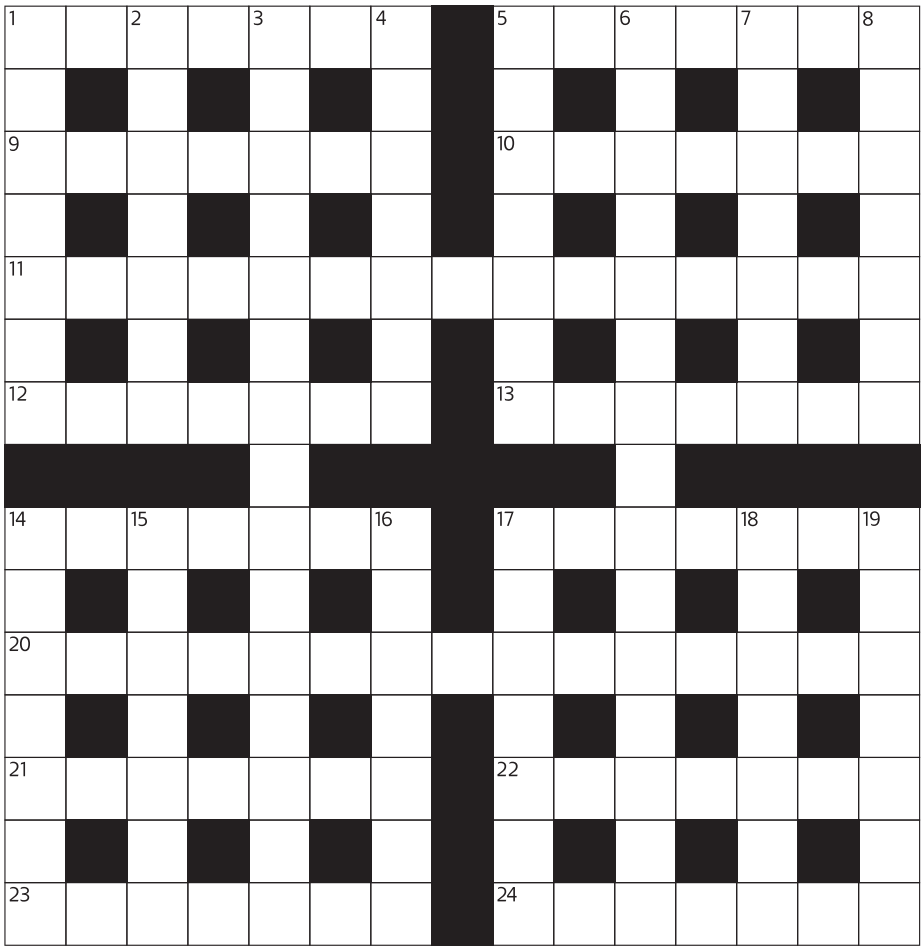

ACROSS

1 and **5** In favor of those who are seeking the air, or those looking for a rich mate? (7,7)

9 Takes things willingly, being of little account with a misstep. (7)

10 "Eat me," it clumsily goes, but four o'clock is the hour to have a meal in it. (7)

11 There's no object in working to a point in such. (15)

12 Put down a little woman to pull things apart. (7)

13 Turn the screws the right way, and get thin making it. (7)

14 Miss West—the wrong sort to be a leader. (7)

17 Tastier, in a quirky way, for the performer. (7)

20 Sun over each ad he frantically put together brings on throbbing temples, due to stress. (7,8)

21 Rave, rage—with a little insight, you'll see that it's only normal. (7)

22 The sort of lettuce one doesn't like to run against. (7)

23 Your former spouse has a crooked meter to show it's far out! (7)

24 Helps make a fool of it, and sits rather awkwardly. (7)

DOWN

1 Got discombobulated with a rather northern type getting fed around it. (7)

2 Keeps track of what might be being played. (7)

3 Not corresponding, being amateur, in a sense, with a certain amount getting "took in." (15)

4 When you might look for eggs at a point that is on the right side of the map usually? (7)

5 Not a cold examination—the furthest from cold! (7)

6 You might have to get very close to the subject to see it with this. (15)

7 I would shortly get in the "happening," which is obvious. (7)

8 Treads heavily on the product of a former marriage. (7)

14 Damn tea! Brew it correctly—that's the command. (7)

15 Sounds like a description of the corn stalk with the best "harvest," but it's really the most spooky thing! (7)

16 Cos been acting up, calling for an X-rating. (7)

17 Here is the camera I reassembled for my country. (7)

18 One of a pair for your extremities, and in Paris you'll get juice if you plug into it. (7)

19 Comes out as agitated germs spread from the capital of Estonia to beyond the far edge of Europe. (7)

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When teens want to get high
YOUR PRESCRIPTION IS AVAILABLE FOR PICK UP.

TEENS ARE ABUSING PRESCRIPTION DRUGS THEY FIND AT HOME.
HERE'S WHAT THEY ARE DOING—AND HOW PARENTS CAN STOP IT.

It can be medication left over from your last surgery. Maybe they're the pills you keep on the dresser or tucked inside your purse. Teens are finding prescription drugs wherever people they know keep them—and abusing them to get high. In fact, 70 percent of persons age 12 and older who abuse prescription painkillers say they get them from a relative or friend[1]—leading to several troubling trends:

- **Every day, 2500 kids age 12 to 17 try a painkiller for the first time.**[2]
- **Prescription drugs are the drugs of choice for 12 and 13 year olds.**[3]
- **Teens abuse prescription drugs more than any illicit street drug except marijuana.**[4]

What's also disturbing is they don't realize these drugs can be as dangerous as street drugs. So kids who would never try street drugs might feel safe abusing prescription drugs. Misperceptions about prescription drug abuse have serious consequences. In fact, drug treatment admissions for prescription painkillers increased more than 300 percent from 1995 to 2005.[5] Now that you know prescription drug abuse is a problem, here are ways parents can keep it from affecting their kids' lives:

- **Safeguard** all drugs at home. Monitor quantities and control access.
- **Set clear rules** for teens about all drug use, including not sharing medicine and always following the medical provider's advice and dosages.
- **Be a good role model** by following the same rules with your own medicines.
- **Properly conceal and dispose** of old or unused medicines in the trash.
- **Ask friends and family** to safeguard their prescription drugs as well.

Following these steps is a start. Let your teen know where you stand.
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1. 2006 National Survey on Drug Use and Health, SAMHSA, September 2007.
2. Ibid. 3. Ibid. 4. Ibid. 5. 2005 Treatment Episode Data Set, SAMHSA, 2007.

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